

RURAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATION  
IN  
LITCHFIELD COUNTY, CONNECTICUT

BY  
HENRY W. DIECKEN JR., AND NATHAN L. WHETTEN



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**Henry W. Riecken, Jr. and Nathan L. Whetten**

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FRED R. ZELLER

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
INTRODUCTION .....	7
I THE SETTING .....	9
Topography .....	11
Soils .....	11
Climate .....	12
II THE PEOPLE .....	15
Settlement .....	15
Population Trends .....	17
The Foreign-Born .....	20
Summer Residents .....	21
Distribution and Composition of the Population in 1940 .....	22
III MAKING A LIVING .....	29
Economic History .....	29
The Industrial Situation in 1940 .....	32
Employment of the Rural-Farm Population .....	33
Commercial and Part-Time Farming .....	35
IV DAIRY FARMING .....	37
Land in Farms .....	37
Tenancy .....	37
Stability of Residence .....	38
Agricultural Financing .....	38
Agricultural Products .....	39
The Organization of a Dairy Farm .....	40
Cows .....	41
Machinery .....	43
The Seasonal Cycle of Work .....	43
The Daily Cycle of Work .....	45
Herd Management .....	47
Labor .....	47
The Character of Dairy Farming .....	48
V LEVELS OF LIVING .....	51
Income .....	51
Housing .....	52
Food .....	53
Clothing .....	53
Transportation and Communication .....	54
Educational Level .....	55
Health .....	56
Recreation .....	56
Achieving the Standard of Living .....	57

VI	GENERAL FEATURES OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION .....	59
	Formal Associations .....	59
	Localism of Groups .....	62
	The Three Main Segments of Rural Society .....	64
	Seasonal Residents .....	65
	Farmers .....	67
	The Resident-Nonfarm Segment .....	70
VII	LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL UNITS .....	73
	Town Meeting Government .....	73
	The County .....	78
VIII	CHURCHES AND SCHOOLS .....	81
	Churches .....	81
	Schools .....	87
IX	FORMALLY-ORGANIZED SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS .....	93
	Agricultural-Technological Associations .....	93
	Farm Bureau .....	93
	Dairy Herd Improvement Association .....	98
	Artificial Breeding Association .....	99
	Breeders' Associations .....	100
	Producers' Cooperatives .....	100
	Buyers' Cooperatives .....	102
	Production Credit Association .....	102
	Civic-Sociability Associations .....	104
	Civic and Welfare Organizations .....	104
	Youth Groups .....	105
	Fraternal Organizations .....	108
	Miscellaneous Sociability Clubs .....	111
	The Role of Civic-Sociability Associations .....	111
X	AGRICULTURAL PUBLIC AGENCY RELATIONSHIPS .....	115
	The Agricultural Extension Service .....	115
	The Agricultural Conservation Program .....	116
	The Farmers Home Administration .....	117
XI	OTHER SOCIAL GROUPS .....	119
	Neighborhoods and Villages .....	119
	Trade and Service Centers .....	120
	The Extended Family .....	120
	Informal Groupings .....	122
	Auctions .....	123
	Town Fairs .....	124
XII	CONCLUSION .....	127
	Town Meeting Government .....	127
	The Place of Part-Time Farming .....	128
	The Central Value Structure .....	129
	Conservation and Caution .....	131
	The Worth of a Man .....	132
	Cultural Assimilation of the Foreign-Born .....	132
	Segmentation of Rural Society .....	134
	The Role of Dairying in the Culture .....	134

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. Map of southern New England and Southeastern New York, showing the location of Litchfield County in relation to selected urban centers .....	10
Figure 2. Map of Litchfield County showing the locations of the twenty-six towns .....	16
Figure 3. Map of Litchfield County showing the distribution of the population in 1940 .....	23
Figure 4. Age and sex pyramid comparing the total population of Litchfield County with that of the United States for 1940 .....	25
Figure 5. Map of a village in Litchfield County showing the spatial distribution of dwellings according to the occupation and place of work of the householder in 1948 .....	121



## INTRODUCTION

This study is a description of rural social organization in Litchfield County, Connecticut. It analyzes some of the more important relationships among the people, the land on which they work and live, and the groups through which they accomplish their common purposes. The study supplements previous investigations carried on at the University of Connecticut describing changes in the population and social organization of the small country towns of the state.<sup>1</sup>

Litchfield County was chosen for study because it is one of the most important dairy farming areas in New England and represents a type of rural community organization that is emerging in some of the more highly urbanized areas of northeastern United States, especially in southern New England. In these areas, country communities are no longer composed of homogeneous farming populations bound together by common occupational interests and by a common outlook. On the contrary, they include people with widely differing interests from all walks of life. Modern transportation and communication facilities have made it possible for city workers to live in the country and yet maintain their urban employment. The city business man, the industrial worker, the office clerk, the part-time farmer and the seasonal summer resident all live side by side, interspersed among commercial farmers in a rural community containing nationality groups from a dozen different countries.

Since dairying is a major agricultural enterprise in New England, the focus of the study is upon the rural-farm people of Litchfield county who earn their living by selling fluid milk. But sharing the spotlight are their neighbors who may raise poultry, lay bricks, run turret lathes, or work in offices. Together they have developed a social organization unique in rural society. Its structure and operation, its adaptability and its stresses and strains are analyzed in the present report.

The study is based upon United States Census data for 1940 and 1945; on the material found in newspapers, magazines, bulletins, annual reports, and other printed matter about the county; on a few special

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, N. L. Whetten, et al., *Studies of Suburbanization in Connecticut*, Storrs Agr. Exp. Sta. Bulls. Nos. 202, 226, 230; and N. L. Whetten and Henry W. Riecken, Jr., *The Foreign-Born Population of Connecticut, 1940*, Storrs Agr. Exp. Sta. Bull. No. 246.

surveys which happen to have been made by other agencies; and, most of all, upon systematic interviews with selected inhabitants of the county.<sup>2</sup>

It is impossible to mention the names of all those who contributed in one way or another to the success of this project. It is the result of the joint efforts of many persons. Residents of Litchfield County — farmers, school teachers, church leaders, housewives, businessmen, industrial workers, and town officials — all cooperated wholeheartedly by patiently answering questions and voluntarily supplying other information which they thought might be useful. Without their friendly cooperation the study never could have been made. A special debt of gratitude is due Raymond P. Atherton, County Agricultural Agent, and all members of the Litchfield County Agricultural Extension staff who always found time to answer questions, suggest sources of information, hunt up old reports and discuss the many preliminary hypotheses which were formulated. Their cheerful, friendly cooperation is greatly appreciated.

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<sup>2</sup> The field work was done by Mr. Riecken, while on the staff of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the United States Department of Agriculture, during the latter part of 1945 and the spring of 1946. He is now in the Department of Social Relations at Harvard University. Dr. Whetten is in charge of the research program in rural sociology at the University of Connecticut.



## CHAPTER I

### THE SETTING

Litchfield, Connecticut's largest county, occupies about 940 square miles in the northwest corner of the state. Larger in area than three-quarters of the 3,000-odd counties in the United States, it measures about 27 miles across and 35 miles deep. The boundaries north and west are straight lines abutting Massachusetts and New York, but south and east they are the irregular and frequent jogs that characterize the division into towns of all the New England states. These irregularities result not so much from the topography of the countryside as from early compromise politics between congregations; and later from relatively sudden increases of population within existing towns.

Situated on the western edge of New England and on the rim of the urban-metropolitan region which extends from New York to Boston, Litchfield is on the margin of both a vacationland and an industrial region. Although it contains only one city of over 25,000 persons, (Torrington), the County is literally surrounded by large metropolitan areas (see Figure 1). New York City is only 100 miles south from the county's center and Boston about 140 miles northeast; Hartford, New Britain, Waterbury, Danbury, Bristol, Poughkeepsie in New York, and Springfield in Massachusetts are all within 40 miles.

The county is subdivided into twenty-six towns (see Figure 2 on page 16). These are legally constituted units whose boundaries and jurisdictions are established by the state legislature. Within the towns are numerous areas identifiable by separate place names. Some of these are legally incorporated cities and boroughs with governmental powers supplementary to those of the town containing them, while others are unincorporated hamlets and villages which may be clusters of only a dozen or more houses; while still others are merely place names identifying topographical or historical land marks. An indication of the unequal distribution of population clusters among the towns is found in the fact that, while there are 44 post offices within the twenty-six towns, two towns (Warren and Harwinton) contain no post office. The number of towns in 1790 was only 9, but with the last subdivision, that of Thomaston and Plymouth, the number reached twenty-six.

Highway U.S. route 7, which winds through the low rolling hills along the western border of the county, is the main north-south access to the mountain resorts of western Massachusetts and Vermont, still further north. Summer and winter, a steady stream of vacationists, hunters, fishermen and skiers pass through the county. And besides being a gateway to the mountain ranges of New England, Litchfield County is itself a resort area for many persons.

Although it is one of the leading agricultural counties in Connecticut, and certainly the leading dairy county, Litchfield is so situated as to

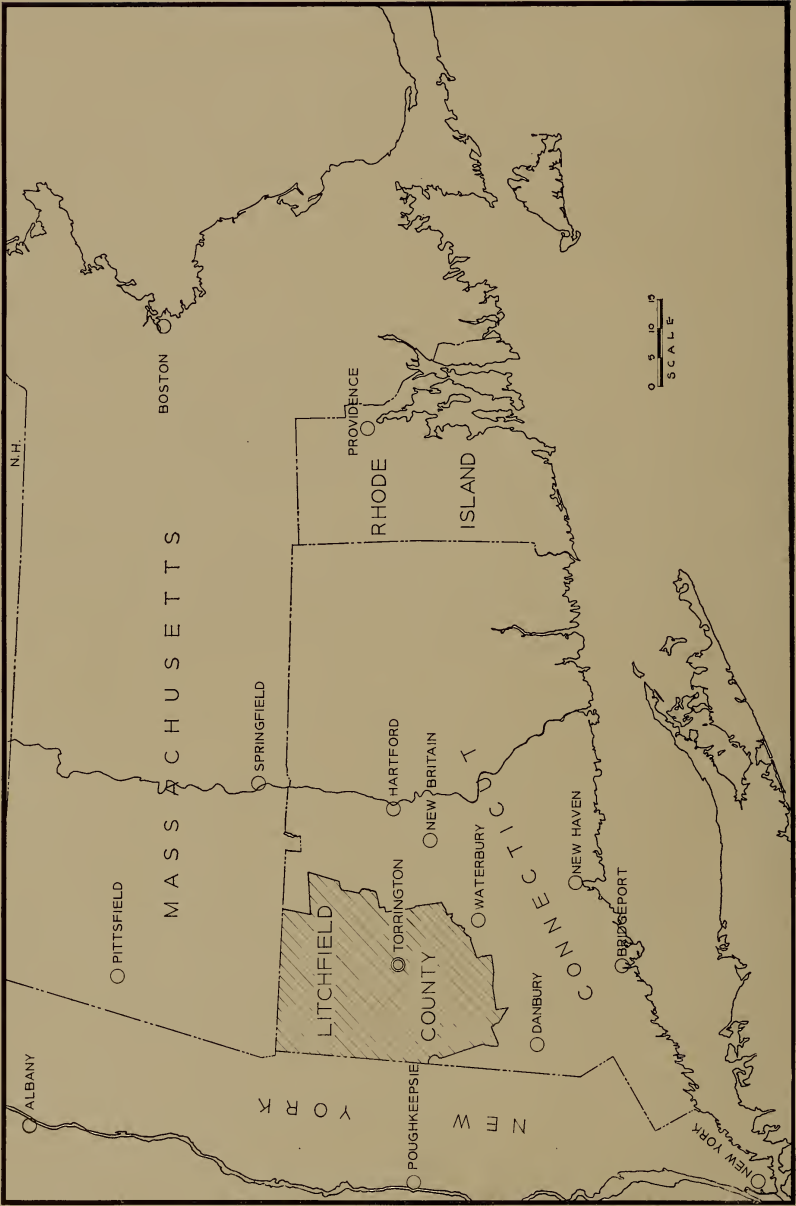


Figure 1.

Map of Southern New England and southeastern New York, showing the location of Litchfield County in relation to selected urban centers.

be open to all sorts of urban and non-agricultural influences. This situation has had a profound effect on its development and on the patterns of life, the kind of people, and the ways of doing things, which characterize the county.

In 1940, the county contained 87,041 inhabitants, or about 93 persons per square mile. Compare this density of population with that of a representative cotton county in Alabama which has about 56 persons per square mile, of a corn belt county in Iowa, with 34, or a wheat belt county in Kansas with only 4 persons per square mile. Villages are close together and a stretch of ten miles of open country is rare. Distances seem short. You can drive across the county from New Hartford to Sharon on the winding macadam road that snakes across the hills in about an hour, in spite of the 25-mile-an-hour limit through the 9 or 10 villages along the route. Farmers hardly ever have to travel more than four or five miles to do their routine shopping and thirty miles will bring them to a city of 25,000 or more with its department stores and specialty shops. Summer people may come to the Litchfield hills "to get away from it all" but they never get far away.

### Topography

Most of Litchfield County lies in the Western Highlands, which are a part of that larger physiographic unit known as the Green Mountain Plateau. In the southern part of the county, the land is gently rolling, the hills are low and rounded, and there are broad, shallow valleys. As one moves north, the valleys narrow, the hills grow higher and steeper, finally cascading into the rugged Berkshires of western Massachusetts and the Green Mountains of Vermont. The highest elevation in Connecticut is at Bear Mountain in Salisbury town, some 2,355 feet above sea level.

The general slope of the land is southeast and the principal streams which drain the area follow this course. The chief river of the drainage system is the Housatonic, which runs its turbulent, shallow, rocky course through gorges and narrow valleys from Salisbury through to New Milford and Bridgewater. The Shepaug, Pomerag, Naugatuck and Still Rivers roughly parallel the course of the Housatonic to the east, and ultimately flow into it farther south. Besides these rivers, there are hundreds of ponds and lakes, which contribute to the scenic beauty of the countryside.

### Soils

The land formations of Litchfield County came about through glacial invasion. The retreating Labrador ice-sheet created the lakes, streams and ponds, and formed the drumlin ridges. It laid down the glacial till soil, which covers the hard crystalline rocks, the gneisses and schists, which form the underlying crust of the county. It was responsible for the round, smooth-surfaced rocks, the abundance of boulders and the

remarkable variety of soils within a small area, as well as for the lack of correspondence between the soil cover and the rock beneath.

The glaciers left behind rocks and boulders in profusion. The stone walls which mark field boundaries on most old farms are the result of necessity and convenience rather than a sense of the picturesque on the part of early inhabitants and the stone boat is still standard equipment for many farmers who harvest a good crop of rocks every spring.

Except for a narrow belt of limestone valleys which stretch across the towns of Canaan, Salisbury and Sharon from the Massachusetts line to the New York border and follow the Housatonic down through New Milford, most of the soils of the county are acid. Some of them are so acid that they require two to three tons of lime per acre for the successful production of hay and corn for ensilage. Chemical fertility is not high and the average organic content of the surface soil is rarely more than six percent and often less than four, so that the liberal use of both chemical fertilizers and animal and green manures is needed.

Like gold, farm land is where you find it in Litchfield County. Small patches of scattered and unrelated soil types are found all over the county and even within a single ten-acre field. The dairy farmers are widely dispersed to make the most of scattered productive soils or level stretches of land, and in amongst them one finds summer residents, part-time farmers and nonfarm commuters whose satisfactions with country living spring from other sources than farm land alone.

Woodlands crown the hilltops and line the banks of hundreds of streams, ponds, and lakes, constituting some 60 percent of the total area of the county. Coniferous trees predominate but the hardwoods like oak, hickory, birch, maple, and elm give a variety of choice to the woodsman's axe and a renowned blaze of color to the autumn scene. Cordwood is cut for fires on the home farm or for sale in the neighborhood, and logs, mostly oak and pine, are sent to the small, local mills to be sawed into lumber. The existence of but one virgin stand in all the 500-odd square miles that are woodlands, points up the importance of their timber to the people of Litchfield from the days of earliest settlement to the present.

### **Climate**

Litchfield people enjoy a generally cool, moist climate and put up with highly changeable, almost erratic, weather. The mean annual temperature is 46 degrees Fahrenheit, and while there is considerable variation in temperatures between winter and summer, and even from day to day, extremes of heat or cold are unusual. Summer temperatures are likely to vary between 70 and 80 degrees, and on only half a dozen days a year will the thermometer rise above 90 degrees. In the winter temperatures are likely to run between 0 and 40 degrees. Sub-zero temperatures are experienced nearly every winter, but rarely drop below -10.

But what is more striking to the visitor to Litchfield, is the sudden variability and the constant fluctuation of temperatures within these extremes, especially in winter. From day to day, or even from morning till night, variations of 20-30 degrees are not uncommon from December through March. In the summer, the thermometer moves through a narrower range, but even then it is not unusual to wake up in a 65 degree atmosphere, find the thermometer at 80 at noon, and back to 65 or 70 in the early evening.

The same variability is noticeable in the seasonal shifts in temperature. The last killing frost in Spring generally occurs between May 1 and May 15, and the first Autumn killing frost between October 1 and 15, thus giving an average growing season of 150 days. But killing frosts have been known to occur as late as June and as early as September, further reducing the already short time available for crop production.

As far as rainfall is concerned, the climate is a little more reliable. Although there are no guarantees of rain at any given time, Litchfield County's inhabitants can usually count on having at least one-tenth of an inch of rain on one day out of three. Average annual precipitation is between 46 and 48 inches, and rainfall is fairly evenly distributed throughout the year. January is the driest month, averaging 3.3 inches, while August is the wettest with 4.5 inches. Individual months may vary widely from these averages, but the county hardly ever experiences severe, prolonged drought. There have been only a few seasons in which rainfall was seriously deficient for more than a month.

This constant supply of moisture keeps fields green throughout the frost-free year, and is very well suited for the production of hay and pasture. It is a rare summer in which pastures dry out completely and become unpalatable, and farmers are usually assured of a large crop of succulent hay.

In the winter, usually from late December through early March, snowfall is fairly heavy, averaging from 45 to 75 inches a year in various parts of the county. But here again, variability is the keynote. Snow may start falling as early as the first week in December and may remain on the ground for a month or more of cold, cloudy weather; or the winter may be mild with frequent light storms and speedy thaws which leave the earth bare for most of the winter.

The effects of this climate are widespread. For the farmer, the heavy snowfall means that barns and outbuildings should be planned for easy access with a minimum of shoveling. He must be assured the town will plow him out after a storm in time to get his milk down to the pickup platform on the main road. The relatively short frost-free season keeps the farmer on edge during spring and fall. While he dare not jump the gun in planting corn, for example, he must not wait too long, lest he find a field of poor, immature corn in the fall which must be cut anyway or be further damaged by an early frost. In late spring a sudden thaw in April may leave the ground too muddy



to work, and may set back the planting schedule two weeks, piling up so much pressing work on him that "a man just don't know where he's at."

And while the absence of a definite rainy season relieves him of now-or-never dependence upon the weather, it has drawbacks. He cannot count on more than two or three days of bright, hot sunshine in succession when he wants to get in the first cutting of hay in June. When there is good weather, haying is the all-important work, and must be done as promptly and speedily as possible. Almost nothing is allowed to interfere: "I'd've liked to get down to his funeral, 'cause I knew him for years, but I had all this hay cut and I wanted to get it in the barn before the rain." In spite of assiduous work and frequent glances at the sky, supplemented by radio weather bulletins, it is a rare farmer who does not get some of his hay crop drenched while it is curing in the field. He may expect the same treatment during the rest of the year. In any season there will be some days when it is too rainy or the ground too wet to work outdoors at all.

And farmers are not the only people affected. School children usually get one or two unanticipated holidays a year when the snowfall keeps school buses from getting through the back roads. Inn-keepers and resort managers welcome a good fall of crisp snow, for it means the skiers will be up from New York over the week-end. And they pray for dry weather on the Fourth of July and Labor Day, and on all the week-ends during July and August, awaiting the crowds of motorists. Many outdoor events, such as fairs, cattle shows, picnics, church festivals or outings have alternate rain-dates announced: "In case of rain it will be held on the following Saturday." Living arrangements are geared to the weather. Houses and clothes must be ready to meet the sudden drops in temperature on summer evenings, and the equally sudden rises at midday in winter. It is always wise to bring along a topcoat or a sweater when you're going to the movies or to a pasture meeting in August—"you can't tell, it might turn cool later on." Better leave the storm windows on through April—"you can never tell when you're gonna get one of them late March blizzards." "That's why I'd like to have an oil burner—lots of times it's just chilly enough to be uncomfortable, but you don't want to build a furnace fire 'cause you know it'll be hot tomorrow." Mark Twain, a Hartford neighbor to Litchfield County, may well have been looking just a few miles to the west when he remarked: "If you don't like the weather, just wait a minute."

## CHAPTER II

## THE PEOPLE

## Settlement

Although there were white settlers on the borders of what is now Litchfield County as early as 1675, when Woodbury was named, and although New Milford was incorporated in 1712, the first concerted movement of a group of pioneers into the area began in 1719. In that year, Lieutenant John Marsh, of Hartford, Deacon John Bell of Lebanon and 57 others petitioned the General Court of Connecticut to settle a town "in the Western Lands." Their petition granted, a small band of settlers crossed the hills from Hartford and Windsor in 1720 and, in characteristic Puritan fashion, negotiated with the Pootatuck Indians for the purchase of the town of Litchfield,<sup>1</sup> which they bought for £ 15. With a properly signed deed and a written agreement, the new settlers felt secure in their tenure, and went about the business of making a home out of the wilderness.

The first settlement, near what is now Bantam in the town of Litchfield, grew slowly and was for several years the principal white habitation. Soon, however, other settlers began to trickle in: Small settlements appeared in New Milford; English and Dutch settlers came up the Hudson and began scattered settlements around Salisbury and Sharon, and families began to drift north from the older plantation of Woodbury. Plymouth (which included Thomaston) and Watertown were settled out of Waterbury in 1728 and 1729 and grew gradually.

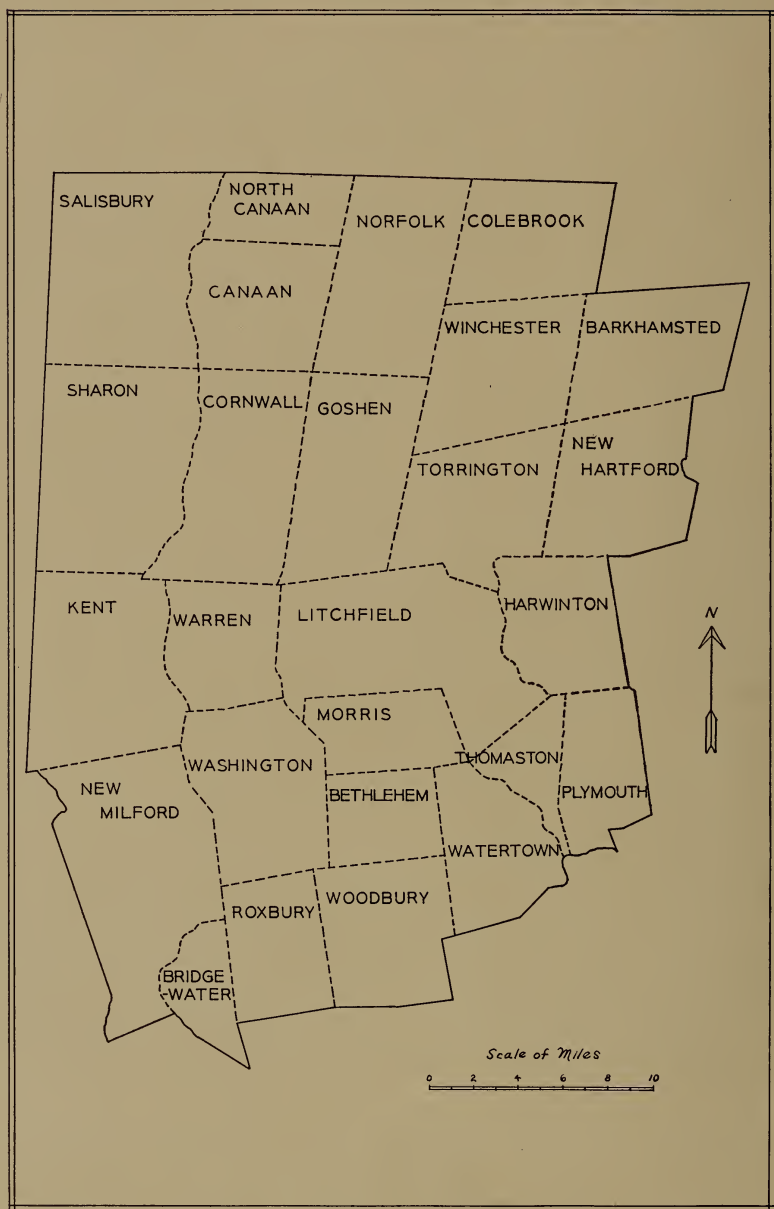
The pressure for new land was strong, however, and colonists in the eastern plantations began to bombard the General Court with petitions for settlement. In 1726 provisions were made for settling the towns of Harwinton,<sup>2</sup> New Hartford, and Torrington, all of which were taken up between 1734 and 1736 and acquired town privileges between 1736 and 1740. Barkhamsted, Winchester and Colebrook were more remote and were not settled until the mid-1740's. (The present locations and boundaries of towns are shown in Figure 2.)

But still the undeveloped lands toward the present western border were a powerful lure. In 1737-38 Norfolk, Goshen, Canaan, Cornwall, Kent, Salisbury and Sharon were laid out by the General Court and

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<sup>1</sup> Litchfield was named after Lichfield, a town in Staffordshire, England. Most towns in the county were named from the English towns or counties from which the settlers had come (Kent, Cornwall), from older towns in the colony (New Hartford, New Milford) or from names found in the Bible (Goshen, Canaan).

<sup>2</sup> The town of Harwinton was settled by former residents of Hartford, Windsor and Farmington and hence derives its name from the first three letters of the first two towns and the last three letters of the third - "*Har-win-ton*."

**Figure 2.**

Map of Litchfield County showing the locations of the twenty-six towns.



shares of land in them were offered in public auction to "His Majesty's English subjects inhabitants of this colony." Sales were sometimes slow in some of the more inaccessible towns, but by 1755, Norfolk, the last one settled, had 24 families.

The western towns grew slowly and painfully, taking telling blows from severe winters and short summers, from crop failure and near starvation, from Indian raids and disease. But land was cleared, roads were hacked out, grist and sawmills set up on the streams, and in 1751, the county of Litchfield took up its shares of land and the population expanded. By 1790 there were 38,755 people in the county.

### Population Trends

Through the first decade of the nineteenth century population growth was fairly steady in almost all of the towns in the county. But then it began to falter. Between 1810 and 1820 population decreased by about 100 persons. A substantial gain in 1820-30 was wiped out by a large loss in the decade 1830-40, when the population decreased from 42,858 to 40,448. During this decade every town in the county lost population except three which remained almost stationary. It seems clear that these population losses represented a fairly large-scale out-migration of farm people to the growing industrial centers of the East and to the farmlands of the Western Reserve. Many descendants of pioneers left the poorer hill farms for lands which were more fertile and more easily tilled. But other settlers came along to replace them, and, through natural increase and in-migration, the population of the county as a whole started to increase in the 1840's.

But this second period of settlement was of a different order from the original. Between 1810 and 1840 an era had come to a close. The isolated, self-sufficient farming which had characterized the settlement period was giving way to a commercial agricultural economy. Small villages were beginning to grow as infant industries sprang up and flourished. The Yankee peddler made his appearance, and, with him, the era of manufacturing forged ahead.

Until 1840, gains or losses in population had been fairly evenly distributed over the county. But now striking differences began to appear among towns. Goshen and Warren, for example, did not recover from their losses after 1840, but continued to decline in population. Both of these were, and to this day remain, relatively isolated towns with only small village and hamlet settlements. Gradually, one by one, other rural towns began to lose population. This trend became pronounced in the 1850's, and the 1870 census shows a marked drop in the population of most rural towns—a trend which persisted almost unchecked until the 1930's. So widespread was the decline in population during this period that even in 1940 many of the towns contained fewer inhabitants than they had in 1830 (See Table 1). After 1930 some of the rural towns, however, began to stabilize in population and several of them even to regain losses.

Table 1

NUMBER OF INHABITANTS IN LITCHFIELD COUNTY, BY TOWNS,  
FOR SELECTED YEARS FROM 1830 TO 1940 \*

TOWNS	YEARS						
	1830	1840	1860	1900	1920	1930	1940
Barkhamsted .....	1,715	1,571	1,272	864	719	697	724
Bethlehem .....	906	776	815	576	536	544	715
Bridgewater .....	.....	.....	1,048	649	481	432	537
Canaan .....	2,301	2,166	2,834	820	561	565	555
Colebrook .....	1,332	1,232	1,375	684	492	564	547
Cornwall .....	1,714	1,703	1,953	1,175	834	878	907
Goshen .....	1,734	1,529	1,381	835	675	683	778
Harwinton .....	1,516	1,201	1,044	1,213	2,020	949	1,112
Kent .....	2,001	1,759	1,835	1,220	1,086	1,054	1,245
Litchfield .....	4,456	4,038	3,200	3,214	3,180	3,574	4,029
Morris .....	.....	.....	769	535	499	481	606
New Hartford .....	1,766	1,703	2,758	3,424	1,781	1,834	1,836
New Milford .....	3,979	3,974	3,535	4,804	4,781	4,700	5,559
Norfolk .....	1,485	1,393	1,803	1,614	1,229	1,298	1,333
North Canaan .....	.....	.....	.....	1,803	1,933	2,287	2,304
Plymouth .....	2,064	2,205	3,244	2,828	5,942	6,070	6,043
Roxbury .....	1,122	971	992	1,087	647	553	660
Salisbury .....	2,580	2,562	3,100	3,489	2,497	2,767	3,030
Sharon .....	2,615	2,407	2,556	1,982	1,585	1,710	1,611
Thomaston .....	.....	.....	.....	3,300	3,993	4,188	4,238
Torrington .....	1,651	1,707	2,278	12,453	22,055	26,040	26,988
Warren .....	986	872	710	432	350	303	328
Washington .....	1,621	1,622	1,659	1,820	1,619	1,775	2,089
Watertown .....	1,500	1,442	1,587	3,100	6,050	8,192	8,787
Winchester .....	1,766	1,667	3,513	7,763	9,019	8,674	8,482
Woodbury .....	2,045	1,948	2,037	1,988	1,698	1,744	1,998
COUNTY TOTAL ....	42,855	40,448	47,298	63,672	76,262	82,556	87,041

\* Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census.

In spite of the losses in the smaller towns, the county as a whole has been gaining in population for many years because the towns which became manufacturing centers showed an almost precise reversal of the trend in the smaller towns. Beginning in the 1860's and 70's, Torrington, Plymouth, Thomaston, Winchester and Watertown showed large, often sharp increases in population until 1930, when their rate of growth began to decline. It declined further between 1930 and 1940, and in Plymouth and Winchester there were even slight losses during this decade (see Table 1).

These data reflect the major epochs in the pattern of settlement in the county. The initial period of pioneering and the growth of small villages and self-sufficient farms, from 1720 to about 1810 was followed by a period of farm abandonment, particularly in the more isolated rural towns where the new commercial agriculture was not favored by situation and transportation facilities, where soil was exceptionally thin, hilly or stony. This population loss also signals the beginning of the westward movement as the more fertile lands of the middle country were being opened up and Litchfield inhabitants joined the wave of pioneers.

The period from 1840 to 1860 was one of struggle on the part of an agricultural economy and a rural way of life to maintain itself in the face of rising industrialization and the transition of farm-trading hamlets into villages and small cities. Industry had been scattered among dozens of tiny shops in almost every village, but, under the impetus of the expanding western markets for manufactured goods, centralization of industry forged ahead. By the 1870's manufacturing villages were growing by leaps and bounds, (between 1890 and 1930 the urban population increased 480 percent) while their open-country neighbors were sliding down the slope of diminishing population. It was a long period of decline—one that continued until the 1920's when automobiles and hard roads began to appear all over the county.

The 1930's mark the flowering of the suburbanization movement,<sup>3</sup> the third major epoch in settlement patterns. Litchfield people still work in the industrial centers of Torrington, Plymouth, Bristol and Thomaston, but more and more of them are living in the rural communities of Goshen, Colebrook, Warren and other thinly settled open-country areas.

Evidence of recent suburbanization is provided by the data on rural population. Between 1890 and 1930 the rural population increased at a very slow rate compared to the urban population (18 percent vs. 480 percent). However, in the decade between 1930 and 1940, the rural population increased much faster than the urban. Of the 4,485 people by which the population increased during this decade, only 739 (16.5 percent) were urban and 3,746 (83.5 percent) were rural. The gain

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<sup>3</sup> See N. L. Whetten, et al., *Studies of Suburbanization in Connecticut*, Storrs Agric. Exp. Sta. Bulls. Nos. 202, 226 and 230.

resulted in a rate of decennial increase of 7.7 percent for the rural, and 2.2 percent for the urban population.

Thus it is evident that much of the in-migration since 1930 was to the county's rural areas. That this movement means an expansion of commercial agriculture in the county is doubtful and evidence will be presented later which implies a different conclusion—namely, that people are moving to open-country residences but are not carrying on commercial farming enterprises. Rather this seems to be a phase of the suburbanization movement, noted elsewhere in Connecticut,<sup>4</sup> which means residence in the open-country with, perhaps, a little part-time farming, gardening, or poultry raising while the family derives the major part of its living from urban, or, at least, off-the-farm employment.

### The Foreign-Born

When the towns of Norfolk, Goshen, Canaan, Cornwall, Kent, Salisbury and Sharon were offered for settlement in 1737-38, one of the restrictions of the sale was that it be made only to "his Majesty's English Subjects inhabitants of this colony." Almost all of the early settlers were English or of English stock. They brought a unitary culture with them, and established towns which were homogeneous as far as nationality was concerned. Buells, Marshes, Hulls, Wolcotts, Reeves, Beaches were the names on the lists of voters, and the stock that is nowadays called "Yankee," "old-American" or "Colonial" dominated the scene. A mere handful of Dutch lived in the northwest corner of the county and a tiny band of Acadians, French refugees from Canada, found a home in Litchfield town in 1756. It was nearly a century later that the Yankee population began to be thinned by the immigrants of western Europe.

In the 1840's and 50's the Irish and the Germans came in sizeable numbers. Working on the railroads, or as indentured laborers on farms or as domestics they began to move into the small villages. Schmidts, Sullivans, Vogels, and O'Briens began to appear in the school rolls. By 1860, 11.2 percent of the population were foreign-born, mostly Irish. French-Canadians also appeared in these decades and continued to swell the mill population.

In the 1870's and 1880's the Poles and Italians started to appear in great numbers. Many of them turned to the rapidly growing industrial cities in the county while others took manual labor jobs or went to work on farms. In the early 1900's the tide of European immigration into the county reached its crest. Swedes and Scotch, Czechs and Swiss, Russians and Lithuanians, French and Austrians joined the flow in increasing numbers, and the percentage of foreign born rose to 21.8 in 1900 and to 24.7 in 1910. The old Yankee stock began to feel the impact of this immigration. Not only did the foreigners crowd into the mills and shops, but they began to set up as independent shop-

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

keepers, and service workers, and to take over some of the poor, abandoned farms and make them pay.

In 1930, more than half (57.8 percent) of the population of Litchfield County was either foreign-born or native-born of foreign or mixed parents. In some towns like Plymouth and Torrington this group made up more than two-thirds of the population. In others, notably Canaan, Cornwall, Colebrook, Kent and Morris, native-born whites were the dominant group and foreign stock was less than 35 percent of the total.

Today the proportion has balanced out somewhat. The foreign-born are aging and immigration has been so reduced that their numbers are decreasing rapidly. While foreign-born made up 21.3 percent of the population in 1930, they were only 17.2 percent in 1940. Their first-generation descendants are probably proportionately fewer too, though exact evidence on this point is not available. But although they have moved out of one Census category into another, the Grawsackas, Rosinis, Walthers, Weingarts, Thulliards, Puzinskis, Capacinos, and Shanleys retain some of their cultural heritage. Some attempt to perpetuate it through nationality organizations of one kind or another. The mayor of a city on the edge of the county recently announced that his schedule for one day included "(1) a program of the Federation of French-Canadian Societies, (2) a picnic for the Church of the Immaculate Conception Choir-boys, predominately Irish, (3) a saengerfest sponsored by the state German-American singing societies, (4) a reception for the Lebanese-Syrian veterans, and (5) the national convention of the Lithuanian-American Labor association."

But most of the sons and daughters of recent immigrants do not try to maintain their foreign identifications. Some of them have anglicized their names, many have joined non-nationality associations; they grow rusty in the use of their parents' native languages, and speak English with the same clipped accent which their Yankee neighbors use. They run for town office and are elected, not by a pressure group of one or two nationalities, but by the whole community when it feels they would make good selectmen, school board members or justices of the peace. Assimilation of a large part of the second generation has taken place without conflict or pain.

### Summer Residents

In addition to the foreign-born, another population element has been migrating into Litchfield County for over a century known variously as "city people," "summer people," or "New Yorkers." They form a distinct but not a uniform group in the population although they appear in no census category. Their chief distinguishing characteristics are that they are not bound to the county occupationally and that they reside in it only part of each year. For the most part, however, they own property here and return from year to year to the same residences.



It is uncertain just when the first summer residents came to Litchfield County. A long-time resident of Litchfield recalls that in 1869 or 1870 his grandfather sold a small triangular piece of land and a small house to a family of two sisters and a brother, who were residents of New York City, but who had had family ties with this part of the county a generation or more earlier. It was their custom to move into the house in June or July every year, bringing their personal effects, house servants, and a coachman. Hiring a rig locally, they would go for a daily drive along the rural roads nearby and return to the house to read, sew or otherwise amuse themselves quietly. In September they would return to New York, and the house would be closed by the servants and remain that way until the following summer.

A magazine article<sup>5</sup> of 1896 comments on the scenic beauty, the leisurely living, the many fine drives and strolls that can be found in Litchfield town, and points out that there are resort hotels, livery stables and other facilities available to the vacationing visitor. The same article mentions the "summer resident" as well as the "summer guest" and it is evident that a distinction both as to length of stay and type of residence is being made.

For one reason or another, it was the "summer resident" who became the dominant type. In the early part of the present century the number of summer residents in various rural villages throughout the county began to grow. Initially many were families who had some ancestral tie with the village, but gradually the number who came simply to find rural leisure and scenic beauty increased.<sup>6</sup>

During the 1930's the increased use of automobiles began to move these seasonal residents out of the villages and onto farms. After 1931, when Connecticut began rural road improvement on a large scale, the movement to farms spurted, and has continued unabated ever since.

### Distribution and Composition of the Population in 1940

The foregoing historical account emphasizes a long-time trend toward heterogeneity of population in Litchfield County. At the present time the pattern of diversity is well established. Residences and part-time farms compete with commercial farms for the use of land; foreign-born and the children of foreign-born are found in all sections of the county; and the movement of people into the county is partially offset by the out-migration of others.

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<sup>5</sup> Dwight C. Kilbourne, "Litchfield," *The Connecticut Quarterly*, 1896, V. II, No. 3.

<sup>6</sup> N. L. Whetten and V. A. Rapport, *The Recreational Uses of Land in Connecticut*, Storrs Agr. Exp. Sta. Bul. No. 194. Special tabulations of occupations from the 1940 U. S. Census of Population indicate that seasonal residents are an important element in the economy of Litchfield County.

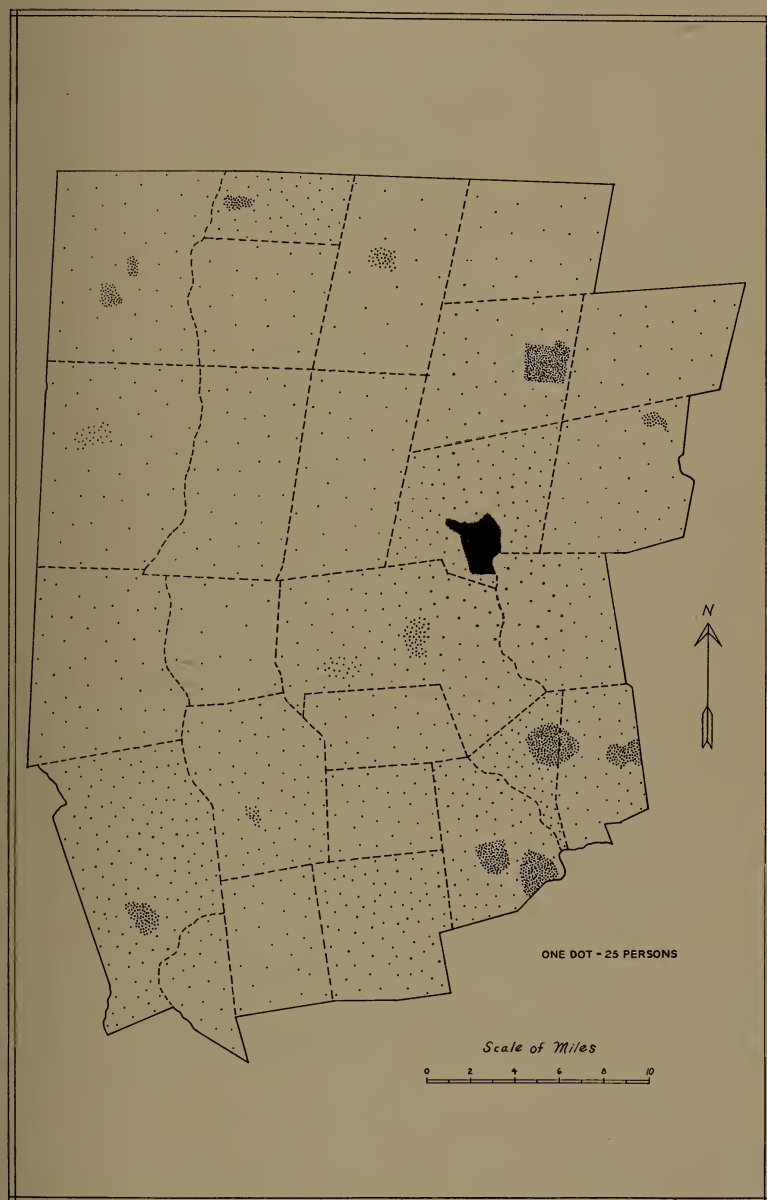


Figure 3.

Map of Litchfield County showing the distribution of the population in 1940. Clusters of dots indicate places of 500 or more persons; no attempt is made to indicate the actual residence pattern of the population living outside such places.

An irregular distribution of the population followed the rapid growth of the cities and the spread of a suburbanization movement. The two incorporated cities, Torrington and Winsted,<sup>7</sup> claim two-fifths of the county's population and another fifth live in the thickly settled manufacturing towns of Watertown, Plymouth, and Thomaston. The rest of the population is thinly scattered over the county; and ten towns have fewer than 1,000 inhabitants each. Actually almost every range of settlement pattern can be found, from the lonely isolation of Warren, where large areas of land are unoccupied, to the flourishing bustle of Torrington (see Figure 3).

Nearly a fifth of the population are foreign-born and another third are the sons and daughters of foreign-born parents. Although most of the foreign-born are from Italy, Poland, Germany or Eire, altogether over 40 countries are represented in the population. They have settled in all sections of the county, concentrating somewhat in the urban centers where job opportunities are greatest.<sup>8</sup> Most of the foreign-born are in the older age brackets, so that the problem of assimilation is no longer acute. Less than one percent of Litchfield's population is non-white; and, for the most part, these are Negroes living in the more populous villages and cities.

The age distribution of the county's population differs rather sharply from that of the United States as a whole (see Figure 4). Litchfield has a relatively high proportion of persons over 45 years of age and a small proportion of persons under 20. The concentration of persons in the extreme age groups is especially noticeable in Litchfield. As compared with the United States, there is a strikingly large proportion of persons over 60 and, at the other extreme, a dearth of children under 15.

Similar differences may be noted in the age structure within Litchfield's population from 1930 to 1940 (see Table 2). The 1940 population is definitely older and contains a smaller proportion of young children. This age distribution is the result of several long and short range trends: (1) the aging of the foreign-born without a balancing influx of younger persons; (2) fairly recent suburbanization with an in-migration of older persons; (3) an absolute decrease of young adults (aged 20-30) through out-migration; and (4) a birth rate so low that, if it is sustained for several decades longer, it will result in an actual population decrease unless balanced by in-migration.

Moreover, the rural population of Litchfield County has a higher concentration of people in the older age groups than the county as a whole. Many retired people and some older workers have settled in

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<sup>7</sup> The city of Torrington is located in the town of Torrington. The city of Winsted is in the town of Winchester. See Figure 2.

<sup>8</sup> N. L. Whetten and Henry W. Riecken, Jr. *The Foreign-Born Population of Connecticut, 1940*, Storrs Agric. Exp. Sta. Bull. No. 246.



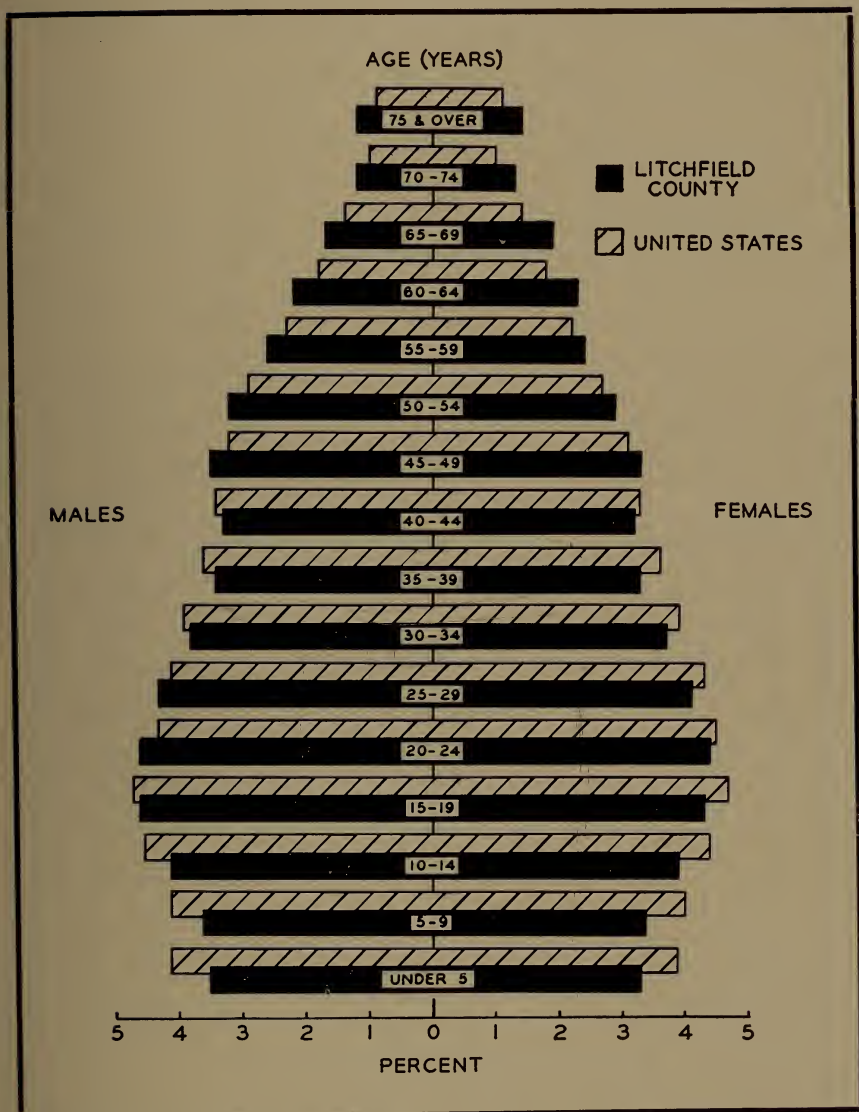


Figure 4.

Age and sex pyramid comparing the total population of Litchfield County with that of the United States for 1940.

Table 2

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE TOTAL AND THE RURAL POPULATION  
OF LITCHFIELD COUNTY, 1930 AND 1940\*

AGE	1940		1930	
	Total Population	Rural ** Population	Total Population	Rural ** Population
<i>All Ages</i>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 5	6.8	6.8	7.9	7.8
5 - 9	7.0	6.9	9.6	9.5
10 - 14	8.0	7.9	10.4	10.2
15 - 19	8.9	8.7	9.6	9.2
20 - 24	9.0	8.5	7.9	7.3
25 - 29	8.4	7.9	6.7	6.3
30 - 34	7.6	7.3	6.7	6.4
35 - 44	13.2	13.1	14.3	14.1
45 - 54	12.9	13.1	11.4	11.8
55 - 64	9.5	10.0	8.4	9.1
65 - 74	6.1	6.8	4.9	5.6
75 and over	2.6	3.0	2.2	2.7

\* Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census.

\*\* Includes both "rural-farm" and "rural-nonfarm" residence categories as used by U. S. Bureau of the Census.

rural areas where they operate small farms or at least have gardens and perhaps a few chickens. Survey evidence shows that substantial numbers of retired or semi-retired people from New York have bought "farms" or estates in towns like Washington, Kent, Sharon, Woodbury and Roxbury. Much of the in-migration to Litchfield County between 1930 and 1940 consisted of older people and many of them chose to live in rural sections of the county.

The county has a slightly unbalanced sex ratio (103.3 males to 100 females). Foreign-born immigrants are always predominantly males and even in 1940 the males outnumbered the females among the foreign-born in every five-year age group above 30-34 years. In addition, there is evidence that the recent out-migration of young adults included a greater proportion of females than males.

Although the birthrate is low in Litchfield County, the greater part of the increase in population from 1930 to 1940 came about through natural increase.<sup>9</sup> There were roughly 4,500 more persons in the county in 1940 than in 1930 and the annual reports on Connecticut vital statistics published by the State Department of Health indicate that the excess of births over deaths amounted to about 3,000 persons during this period. The remaining 1,500 persons are the net result of in-migration. This means that 1,500 more people moved into the county than moved out; for the gross population turnover was probably several times greater.

It seems clear that patterns of settlement, industrial growth, land usage, and migration have culminated in a structure of diverse and complex relationships. Though some elements of the culture of the early settlers have persisted through the years, the participants are certainly much more heterogeneous than the original group of farmsteading English subjects.

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<sup>9</sup> In 1940 Litchfield County had a fertility rate (number of children under 5 per 1,000 women 15-44) of 297 compared with 329 for the United States as a whole.



## CHAPTER III

### MAKING A LIVING

As the previous discussion has implied, the process of making a living in Litchfield County is one that includes a great many diverse activities. Although it is one of the leading dairy counties of New England, and probably the most important dairy area of Connecticut, the production of fluid milk is only one of many activities which concern its inhabitants. We have touched lightly upon the economic history of the county in attempting to explain some of its demographic and social features. We now inquire more thoroughly into just how the present situation came about.

### Economic History

The history of economic development begins with the pioneer period which lasted from 1720 until about 1790. This set the stage for what was to follow. Land was cleared, houses, churches, and schools were built. Towns were laid out and the pattern of government was fixed. Although trapping and hunting were always supplementary sources of food and clothing, the inhabitants soon came to depend principally on their own ability to cultivate the land.

On one of these pioneer farms the choice of crops and livestock was directed simply toward feeding the family, clothing it, and providing as many home-consumed by-products as possible. All that was produced was consumed locally, for there were no available markets for farm produce at the beginning of this period, and no roads or navigable rivers by which it could have been transported. And nearly everything that was consumed was produced at home. The farm family was self-sufficient except for salt, molasses, rum, tea, coffee, tools, iron, metal or china eating and cooking utensils, and some cloth. Wherever possible home-manufactured substitutes for even these items were employed, and while the men of the family plowed, harvested, milked, or cut and drew wood, the women were busy spinning, carding, weaving, making cheese or butter, salting down pork or beef, or manufacturing tallow candles and soap. Farmers were also carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, harness-makers, and carried on a dozen other occupations in their spare time, for there was rarely a skilled craftsman available to care for all of the varied odd jobs and emergencies on the farm. Versatility and self-reliance were vital to his success and were highly esteemed, but they also kept the pioneer farmer from being an efficient producer. Had he been able to specialize in farming alone, he could have increased his production many times. But he was forced into self-sufficiency, and clung to it, growing wheat, corn, barley and oats, cutting hay, fattening a few pigs each year, slaughtering an old ox for beef, and shearing his sheep for wool. His Devon cattle were triple purpose animals. They

furnished power for farm work, milk and also beef, and the farm of 1746, like them, was a far cry from the specialized fluid milk factories that dot the county two hundred years later.

From 1790 to 1830 was a period of branching out and of preparation. Agriculture began to expand and to become differentiated as an occupation rather than simply a way of life. Roads were improved, the era of turnpikes and stage-coaches began, and commerce was greatly expanded. Markets outside of the home farm began to appear. Small factories grew up on streams in villages, and some of the diversity of home manufacturing disappeared. Part-time farming near the village factories grew in importance. Farmers began to lose some of their jack-of-all-trades qualities, although they still tried to be self-sufficient.

In 1796 there were about 283,000 acres of land in farms in the county, of which about 45,600 acres were tilled. Thus, a large part of the county was under cultivation before the end of the 18th century. But the farms were very different from their modern counterparts.

Merino sheep were introduced toward the end of the period we are discussing and commercial wool production became a leading farm enterprise almost overnight. It is doubtful that sheep ever became as popular in Litchfield County as they did in other parts of southern New England, and even as early as 1820 they were facing competition from an infant dairy industry. Goshen was already becoming widely known for the quality of its cheese and butter, and while it was the leading one, it was not the only town which produced considerable quantities of these commodities. Even so, general farming still predominated, and Connecticut was shipping corn meal, wheat, rye, barley, oats, hay, apples, potatoes and beans to New York and other coastal cities during this period.

Between 1830 and 1870 agriculture became more commercialized. No longer could a farmer depend upon scratching out a subsistence minimum from the soil. He had to be able to market his produce and care for his family at least partly out of the profit he made on these sales. When the concept of profit entered the door, subsistence farming on the poorer land in the county flew out of the window. The rich, flat lands of the midwest beckoned and farm abandonment began in the more remote and isolated regions. During this period *general* farming as a commercial proposition reached an early peak and began to decline as competition from the western lands began to make itself felt. Actually, this competition started soon after 1825 when the Erie Canal was constructed. Later, railroads began to spread out through the land and as far as non-perishable crops were concerned, the extensive agriculture of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois began to deal body blows to Yankee farms. To make things still tougher, labor began to drift off the farms into the mills for what seemed to them easier work, higher pay and a more exciting mode of life.

Specialization in dairy products which had begun with cheese-making was continued, but the place of manufacture shifted away from the home farm when in 1844, one of the Nortons started the first cheese



factory in the town of Goshen, buying the summer milk from nearby farmers, and manufacturing the famous "pineapple cheese." In 1849 Gail Borden opened the first condensery in the United States at Burrville, in Torrington town, and another branch of the dairy industry began. Growth was gradual, however, and for many years the supply of milk to both the condensery and the cheese-factory was taken from a very limited area nearby. Specialization was gaining ground, but as late as the 1870's the farmers of Litchfield County were supplying nearby cities with a variety of foodstuffs. As one aged resident put it, "When I was a boy we supplied Waterbury with food; now they supply us."

After 1870, there began a period of gradual, sometimes painful, adjustment on the part of agriculture in Litchfield to two situations: its proximity to an urban-industrial area which was densely populated and unable to raise its own food; and its relatively meager resources in soil, level land and cheap labor. It was during this period that the transition from extensive, general farming to intensive specialization in dairying and poultry-raising took place. Initially, cheese-making had been the major, almost the only kind of dairying. It persisted for a while and was followed by butter-making, induced by the demand for fresh butter from the city population. The creamery era began in the 1870's when the first creamery was opened in Goshen. Simultaneously cheese-making began to die out slowly as price competition was felt from the New York and Ohio cheese-making regions. Cream, the first fluid product sold widely, was marketed in the growing industrial cities nearby as well as being shipped to New York. Gradually, however, several factors combined to alter again the pattern of dairying. Between 1850 and 1860 the urban population of Connecticut increased by 105 percent. From 1860 to 1900 the decennial rate of increase of urban population was steadily about 45 percent and by 1890 one-half the state was urban. The demand for fluid milk from the cities increased, and techniques and means of transportation were developed for shipping it. Fluid milk was being shipped from Litchfield town to New York City via the Shepaug Railroad as early as 1872. Again competition from western creameries began to be felt. The creamery era was moribund by 1915, although a few creameries remained in business until much later—Milo Beach, for instance, did not close his creamery until 1940. Fluid milk became the main chance for survival. Toward the turn of the century, increased purchasing power of the urban population, plus discoveries of the nutritional and disease-preventing value of milk, stimulated its consumption.

The years after 1870 were also marked by other changes. The influx of foreign-born kept steadily on contributing their numbers mainly to the growing factory towns, but turning also to farming, often on marginal land. The summer visitor and, later, the seasonal resident, appeared and altered further the plain, solid colors from which the fabric of rural town life had been woven. The demands for labor from industry became more strident, and the incentive more gaudy. Farmers faced another

threat to profits and, toward the end of this period, turned to expensive and elaborate machinery to replace the year-around hired men who had been their mainstays. Inefficient farms and inefficient farmers were being crowded out.

No definite date for the close of this era has been set. It might be placed at 1930 when the depression in the industrial cities initiated what seemed to be a back to the land movement. It might be placed at 1941 when war broke out and farm labor was stripped from the county and farm youth went off to fight. Or it may occur at some future date when an unknown or unnoticed technological or economic or social force upsets the equilibrium for the fourth time. But for the sake of this analysis, it is convenient and appropriate to bring our historical treatment to a stop in 1940, and to describe the occupational and industrial structure of the county as it was then. This is the last year for which detailed, accurate data are available, and the last in which a normal situation obtained as far as making a living is concerned. The occupational upheavals of the war may have some lasting effect on how people make a living in Litchfield County, but it is too early to tell.

### **The Industrial Situation in 1940**

Since our interest is primarily in the rural life of the county, we can dismiss briefly the industrial situation in the cities of Torrington and Winsted. In both of them, most of the labor force works in manufacturing industries—some 64 percent in Torrington and 51 percent in Winsted. The leading manufactures are non-ferrous metal products such as brass sheet and tubing, and bronze castings; machinery, such as lathes and shapers; iron and steel products, which include almost everything from needles to heavy tools and hardware; and textile products, especially hosiery, underwear and sweaters. Most of the plants are of moderate size, and few indeed employ over 1,000 people. Nevertheless there are many of them, their products are diverse and they require a large proportion of skilled workers.

Neither manufacturing nor the people who are employed in it are confined to these two urban places, however. Among the rural-nonfarm population some 31 percent of the working population are employed in manufacturing, and these are distributed all around the county, even in towns where there are no factories. For example, in Goshen there is no factory of any sort, yet 31 percent of its employed rural-nonfarm population is engaged in manufacturing industries; most of them having jobs in the brass mills of Torrington or Winchester. In Woodbury, where the only industry in 1940 was a small plant (15-20 employees) making lacquered wooden boxes, approximately 85 persons (20 percent of the rural-nonfarm employed population) were engaged in manufacturing industries, most of them in the brass mills of Waterbury. It is evident that there is a large group of commuting workers, who live in the smaller rural towns and work in adjacent city factories.



In some towns, manufacturing industries provide almost the total source of support for the rural-nonfarm population. This is especially true of the belt of towns running along the eastern border of Torrington, through Harwinton, to Plymouth, Thomaston and Watertown. Although none of the last four-named towns are considered urban by the Census they are, as we have seen above, the most densely settled part of the county, and there are many manufacturing plants in each of them. In Thomaston, a clock company and a brass mill employ 54 percent of the working non-farm population. In Plymouth, a lock company and a cast-iron conduit factory engage 45 percent. In Watertown, where 60 percent of the employed rural-nonfarm population work in manufacturing, there is more diversity, and its factories turn out pins, paper clips, bakelite, celluloid and plastics, wire goods, novelties, and knitted wear. Yet, even in these towns, factories do not draw all of their employees from within the town boundaries. Harwinton, which has no industrial plants, has over half its rural-nonfarm population employed in manufacturing, and they commute to Plymouth, Thomaston, and Watertown, as well as to Torrington, and to places outside the county.

In general, it is the Naugatuck Valley in the eastern half of the county where manufacturing industries are most important sources of employment for the rural-nonfarm population. In the western half, where towns are more thinly populated and where the seasonal resident and the summer visitor are more evident, service industries employ a higher proportion of the population. More than half the rural-nonfarm working population was engaged in service industries of one kind or another in the towns of Roxbury, Kent, Washington, Warren, Cornwall, Sharon and Salisbury. Washington, Salisbury and Kent all have private boarding schools for boys; and the persons engaged in professional services in these towns constitute between 20 and 30 percent of the rural-nonfarm employed population. In Warren, Sharon, Roxbury, and also Norfolk, 25 percent or more are engaged in domestic services, reflecting the high proportion of well-to-do seasonal residents and summer visitors who go there.

In only a few towns, notably North Canaan and New Milford, is the proportion of nonfarm workers in wholesale and retail trade of comparable importance. In both of these places a little more than 17 percent are so employed. These two towns have the only trading centers of importance in the western half of the county.

A small proportion of the nonfarm population is engaged in transportation and communication (about 4 percent) and about 3 percent are in agricultural occupations, principally gardening, and doing landscape work on the estates of seasonal residents.

### **Employment of the Rural-Farm Population**

It is perhaps not too surprising to find the rural-nonfarm population engaged principally in manufacturing in nearby cities and large towns,

and in service industries nearer home, but the rural-farm population does present a rather startling contrast to the normal pattern of the United States as a whole.

In Litchfield County only 52 percent of the employed rural-farm population work in agriculture, compared to 78 percent for the United States as a whole. The employment pattern arises in large measure from the relatively greater employment of the rural-farm population in Litchfield; family members who in other areas would be unpaid family laborers, or even entirely outside the labor force, can work as domestic servants, as machine operators, or as clerical or sales personnel in establishments near at hand. About 17 percent of Litchfield's rural-farm workers are engaged in manufacturing and about 18 percent in service industries. Here again much the same pattern is evident as was described for the rural-nonfarm population. Farm people are employed principally in the non-ferrous, iron and steel products, and machinery industries. In the service industries, domestic service accounts for some 10 percent and professional services for about five.

Not only is the distribution of rural-farm people among various industries similar to that for the rural-nonfarm, but their geographic distribution also is much the same. Again, the towns of the Naugatuck Valley, along the eastern border, have the highest proportions of rural-farm employed persons working in manufacturing. In Plymouth, Thomaston and Harwinton, the percentage so employed exceeds those working in agriculture; in Plymouth only 24 percent work in agriculture, in Thomaston, only 34 percent, and in Harwinton only 37 percent. This situation persists, in modified form, in Watertown, Winchester, and Litchfield, exhibiting a characteristic fading as one moves toward the center of the county. Agriculture is more important in the thinly settled towns of the northeast corner, including New Hartford, Barkhamsted, and Colebrook, where manufacturing employment is distinctly secondary to farming. Over in the northwest corner, especially in Canaan, North Canaan, Salisbury and Sharon, and again in the south central section, including New Milford, Bridgewater, Roxbury, Morris and Bethlehem, agriculture is the predominant industry, and manufacturing never occupies more than 12 percent of the employed rural-farm population. These two groups of towns are the most intensely agricultural regions in the county, and it is here that commercial farming comes most nearly into its own. Still, even in these regions, from 30 to 40 percent of the employed farm population is occupied in some activity other than agriculture. Generally, in these towns domestic and professional service occupations are the predominant non-agricultural ones, and this characteristic indicates either the presence of a special institution (Hotchkiss School in Salisbury, for example) or the presence of well-to-do seasonal residents who hire domestics, as in Bridgewater, Roxbury, Sharon and Salisbury. The remaining towns in the county form a more or less homogeneous region where agriculture and services are the leading sources of employment. In Kent, Warren, Cornwall, Washington, and Norfolk this is especially true, and is an indication of the large number

of seasonal residents living on open country places, and hiring caretakers, groundskeepers and household servants from among the local residents. Goshen and Litchfield, the two remaining towns, do not fit clearly into either the central agricultural-residential pattern, nor that of the eastern border towns. They share some of the occupational characteristics of each region, and in both of them agriculture occupies the most prominent place.

The delineation of regions in the county is not a rigid one and there are many exceptions to the generalizations drawn above. For example, in Torrington City there are sizeable dairy farms within plain view of the smokestacks of its factories, and Plymouth and Watertown have some of the best dairy farms in the county. Correspondingly, in the most agricultural parts of the county there are part-time farmers, and also open-country dwellers who do no farming whatsoever.

### Commercial and Part-Time Farming

According to the 1940 Census of Agriculture, there were 2,795 farms in Litchfield County; but the census definition of a farm<sup>1</sup> is so broad that many rural residences and part-time farms are included in this figure. The number of full-time commercial farms, those which local people call "honest-to-goodness farms," or "real farms," is undoubtedly much smaller. Although 1,625 persons are classified as farm operators or farm managers in the Population Census, some of them are semi-retired persons who are not engaged in any commercial operations and others are part-time farmers whose principal source of income lies off the farm. Altogether there are perhaps 1,200 to 1,500 full-time commercial farms in Litchfield County.<sup>2</sup>

It is quite clear that many of the commuting factory workers are engaged in part-time farming, and that many others, including domestic servants, teachers, storekeepers, bus drivers, linemen, masons, carpenters, mechanics, real estate agents, filling station attendants and government workers at least live on large open country places and supplement their cash income with home-grown produce and small sales of eggs, milk, potatoes and fresh vegetables, even if they do not farm on a commercial scale. It is this widespread habit of living in the open country and producing small quantities of food for home consumption or casual sale which accounts for most of the discrepancy between the number of census farms and the number of full-time commercial farms in Litchfield County.

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<sup>1</sup> A farm is any place containing 3 or more acres of land on which some agricultural operations are performed. If a place has less than 3 acres but produces more than \$250 worth of farm products, it also is called a farm.

<sup>2</sup> Over 1,600 Litchfield farms sell or trade agricultural products and could be called commercial in this restricted sense. However, we know that many part-time farmers, and some rural residents, sell farm products.

From one-half to two-thirds of the farms in the county, then, are operated on a part-time basis or as country residences, and the welfare of their owners depends only partly on success in agriculture and much more on the business cycles of industry or commerce. Families living on farms like these are scattered throughout the county although there is a concentration of them in the industrialized towns of the eastern border. Even in the best farming regions of the county there are some families whose interests are different from those of the commercial farmers around them, who do not have the total dependence upon, and, hence, not the deep interest in the prosperity of agriculture which the "real farmers" have. This dispersal of part-time farming is an old story, although it has probably been heightened in the last few decades by improvements in transportation facilities — especially the automobile and hard roads. It has had many effects on life in the county, but one in particular, which we shall mention later, is that it limits the likelihood of finding homogeneous farm neighborhoods anywhere in the county and hence has important effects on the possibilities of mutual aid habits, the exchange of work and so forth. It contributes to the interstitiality of agriculture in the county, and to the feeling, which many Litchfield County farmers have, that they are being crowded out by an industrial way of life.

## CHAPTER IV

### DAIRY FARMING

In terms of people, then, commercial agriculture is a minor industry, since in 1940, it engaged less than 10 percent of the total employed population of the county and only about half of the rural-farm employed. But in other terms it is far from being unimportant.

#### Land in Farms

The nearly 2,800 farms in the county included a total of 299,991 acres, or nearly half the total area of the county. The average size of farms was about 107 acres, and it is probable that most of the commercial farms run between 100 and 200 acres, although perhaps one-quarter of them are less than 100 acres. Historically, the trend in farm size has been downward. Colonial farms ordinarily included 200 or more acres, but by 1860 the average size had been reduced to 127 and as intensity of cultivation has increased, and more tracts have been sold off for residences, farm size has grown smaller.

The acreage in farms is distributed unevenly among woods, cropland, plowable pasture, and what the census terms "all other land" which, in this county, means principally permanent pasture, waste land in swamp or brush, and least of all, the area around the farm home and buildings. Woodland accounts for 34 percent of all farmland and is the greatest single use of land. Cropland accounts for only 26 percent, and plowable pasture for only 14. Actually much of this plowable pasture is old meadow which is pastured after one crop of hay has been cut and it may at any time be included in the rotation and planted to a feed crop. But it is interesting to note that while cropland has been decreasing in acreage since the mid-nineteenth century, in the last few years the amount of plowable pasture has increased, reflecting the greater stress on grass feeding and the growing of roughage, and less on grain production which has characterized the shift from general farming to specialized dairying.

#### Tenancy

Most of the farms in the county are owner-operated. Only 8.4 percent are run by tenants and a large share of these are sons or other relatives of the owner. Tenants are not considered to be inferior to owners, although farm ownership is considered a normal goal, and as a man grows older, he is expected to be making progress toward it. It is considered normal for "a young fellow just starting out" to rent a place, and this course meets with greater approval than "borrowin' a lot of money and gettin' in too deep." But if a man remains a tenant without land and buildings of his own, his ability is doubted by



most of the farm community. He will not be scorned or openly looked down upon by his neighbors, but he will not be given any honors or responsibilities. Some places are operated by managers, almost all of which are owned by well-to-do New York business and professional men who hold their farms more for pleasure or hobby use than as a source of income.

### Stability of Residence

In 1940 the average length of occupancy for all farms was 17 years. The turnover in farm owners is not rapid; rather there is a characteristic stability about occupancy. A farm is regarded not as a speculative enterprise, an opportunity to be taken for a brief time and then passed on in favor of another. But it is valued as an asset to be held, an investment for the long-run, to be cared for, and built up in productivity and value. This characteristic fits well with the slowness and steadiness of dairying as an occupation — with the years required to build a herd, “bring up” pasture and hayland, improve buildings and pay for the investment in land, buildings and machinery.

### Agricultural Financing

The size of investment in a dairy farm is an impressive figure. In 1940 the total value of farm land and buildings was \$29,571,860 in Litchfield County, or an average value per farm of \$10,580. In addition, livestock on farms was worth \$3,331,749 (nearly \$900 per farm). On commercial dairy farms the total investment is likely to be well above these averages. Farm account books summarized by the University of Connecticut showed an average investment (land, buildings, machinery, livestock and supplies) in 1941 of \$19,715, and it is not unusual for the total investment of a commercial farm (not a show-place of a “New Yorker”) to exceed \$25,000.

About half the farms in the county are mortgaged (50.7 percent), but mortgage debt averaged only about one-third of the value of the farm. The abhorrence of debt which became almost an article of faith during the self-sufficient economy apparently remains as an important value today. The attitude which most farmers have, that their farm is not only a long-time investment but that a paid-up farm is their main source of security reinforces intentions and efforts to pay off the mortgage.

The cultural value of freedom from debt, however, does not blind farmers to the intelligent use of credit facilities. The 14 commercial banks and the Production Credit Association in the county do a large volume of business in short-term loans, made principally for buying cattle or machinery, or making repairs and improvements on farm buildings. But these short-term debts are not large and are usually discharged quickly. A credit survey of commercial farmers, chiefly large operators, made in 1945 indicated that about 50 percent had outstanding

short-term debts (excluding open accounts). The average non-real estate debt of owner-operators was \$1,239, representing principally purchases of livestock and machinery. Besides this, most commercial farmers run open accounts, chiefly with feed dealers which are generally paid monthly. Few farmers keep open accounts at food stores or other retail dealers.

The agricultural credit structure of the county reflects the nature of its chief farm enterprise — dairying.<sup>1</sup> That a large number of farms are mortgaged, but not heavily, that short-term debts are small and quickly settled, that feed accounts are paid monthly and groceries are usually bought with cash, is traceable principally to the steady income from dairying. It is not a one-shot, win-or-lose proposition in which the farmer makes one sale for his whole year's income. Rather, income, in the form of semi-monthly milk checks, is fairly evenly distributed throughout the year, and it encourages farmers to pay as they go rather than to accumulate debts.

It is consistent and characteristic of farmers in the county that the same credit survey found that, of those planning to spend money for farm and home improvement, 65 percent did not plan to use credit of any kind, but to finance their expenditures out of income or savings.

### Agricultural Products

In 1940, dairy products were the major source of income on 1,040 farms in the county, while poultry and poultry products were the major source on 271 farms. Since 1,166, or 42 percent, of all the farms in the county were classified by the Census as deriving their income mainly from products used at home, we may conclude that 64 percent of the remaining farms depended mainly on dairying and 17 percent on poultry.

There were 23,709 cows milked in 1944 and the farmers kept over 250,000 laying hens. About 58 percent of the total gross cash income of the county was from dairy products and about 14 percent more from poultry and eggs. Sixty-nine percent of all the farms in the county keep cows for milk and 1,243 farms sold whole milk in 1940. In all, 16,384,979 gallons of milk, worth almost four million dollars, were produced in 1940, and in 1945 the quantity had increased nearly 8 percent to 17,673,491 gallons. Very few farmers sell cream or butter and most of the milk produced is for Class I fluid uses.

It is equally interesting and pertinent to know what the farmers of Litchfield County did not produce. Their only important grain crop was corn, which was grown on 1,069 farms in 1944. A little over 10,000 acres (almost one-seventh of all the cropland in the county) was in corn, but only one-tenth of this acreage was harvested for grain.

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed treatment of credit, see Raymond P. Atherton, *A Study of Credit Problems of Farmers in Litchfield County, Connecticut*, Cornell University Thesis, Ithaca, New York, 1946.

Ensilage, for roughage in cattle feeding, is the principal use of corn. About half as many farms raised some oats — a total of 2,682 acres in 1944, but only one-third of the acreage was threshed or combined, the rest being fed green, again as roughage. Barley, rye, wheat and soybeans together took up only 177 acres in the whole county. Except for a minute amount of corn, grain crops are almost non-existent in the county, and farmers are almost totally dependent upon outside sources for their cattle and poultry feeds. The practice of growing grain crops for their own use began to go out of fashion in the 1880's when grains from the middle west became available at low cost.

Instead of grain, the land of Litchfield County is devoted almost entirely to producing roughage. In addition to the ensilage corn and the unthreshed oats, great quantities of hay are produced. Clover and timothy hays were cut from over 29,000 acres in 1944, and other tame hays accounted for 24,200 acres. Alfalfa, a poor third, was cut from 6,130 acres. Small areas of wild grasses and small grains were also cut for hay, and in all, 90,353 tons of hay were produced in 1944.

The only other farm enterprises of importance were tobacco and fruit, neither of which approach, in extent or quantity, the production of milk, poultry and eggs, and hay. Tobacco, once a major crop in the Washington - New Milford area, is declining in importance. Only 26 farms raised tobacco in 1944, harvesting nearly 100,000 pounds, which was about one-half of the 1939 crop. Apples are grown on more than half the farms in the county and a 150,000 bushel crop is normal in a frost-free year. There are also small quantities of pears, peaches and cherries and some market sweet corn and cabbage are grown.

The agriculture of Litchfield County may be characterized briefly and clearly as predominantly dairying, with poultry a secondary or combination enterprise. Fruit growing, chiefly apples, is a secondary enterprise on many farms, and, in a small area, tobacco is produced. Dairying is highly specialized and the county produces almost no grain but enormous quantities of roughage, for feeding cattle. In short, farming means milk, hay and eggs.

### **The Organization of a Dairy Farm**

Describing a typical dairy farm in Litchfield County is difficult because in farm organization, as in many other departments of life, variety rather than uniformity is common. The acreage of a farm may vary from 50 to upwards of 1,000, the number of milking cows from 5 to 400. Almost any generalization meets with exceptions, but for full-time commercial farms in the county as a whole, some general statements can be made.

A commercial farm is likely to have 30 or 40 percent of its land in woods, one-quarter in crops, another one-quarter in meadow and the remainder in permanent pasture, brush or swampland, and the farm-



stead. The woods supply the family stoves and, sometimes, furnace, and the cropland is likely to be in corn for the silo. The meadow land is cut once, or possibly twice, a season for hay and after that the cattle are turned in to pasture on it. The land in permanent pasture is probably rough stony side-hill which is difficult to work.

The farmstead is usually a group of closely spaced buildings near or along the road. The barn, the headquarters of activity is generally two stories high and serves both as a place to store hay and a shelter for cattle. The hay-mow above generally runs the length of the barn and often is accessible by a ramp so that hay trucks or wagons can be driven onto its floor. The cow stable, below, usually has a concrete floor and one or two double rows of stanchions, with a wide aisle between the gutters. Here, morning and evening the principal farm activity — milking — takes place in all seasons and all weathers, with unflinching regularity.

Near or attached to the stables, but separated from it by at least two doors as the state law requires, is the milkhouse with its electric cooler, racks for drying cans and facilities for cleaning and sterilizing the milking utensils. At one end of the barn is the silo, generally of wood or tile-block construction.

These three are the principal structures of the farm, and are almost invariably standard equipment. Although their sizes, relative positions and architecture may vary, they are present. In addition, there will probably be a chicken coop, (or a house, if the flock is large and eggs or broilers are an important enterprise) a garage, a machinery shed, and, perhaps, miscellaneous outbuildings where feed, small tools, repairing equipment and other items are kept.

### Cows

The number of cows in a Litchfield County farmer's stable is the measure of the size of his enterprise, for, in this area, the total number of acres a man owns is a poor index of his farming. The number of milk cows varies all the way from one or two, typical of the small part-time or residence farm to herds of 75 or 80, and a few herds are counted in the hundreds. Of the 1,931 farms which keep cows for milk, a little more than half have fewer than 10 cows and most of these have 3 or fewer cows. In this range, all the shades of part-time farming are included, as well as many of the dairy-poultry combination farms. Almost no specialized dairy farms fall in this range however. The most frequently encountered herd size is from 10 to 40 cows, and forty-five percent of all the herds in the county are in this class. Only two percent of all the herds are over 50 cows in size. When Litchfield farmers talk about a "good-sized herd" they mean one of 30 to 40 head of milking cows, and a "big herd" is over 50. In addition, on most farms there will be young stock and an average size commercial farm is quite likely to have 35 or 40 head of cattle altogether.

The most popular breed is Holsteins, the large-uddered heavy producers which began to appear in the county in the 1880's when the

fluid milk market was expanding. Probably 30 to 35 percent of all the cattle are Holsteins. Rivalling them in popularity are Guernseys whose higher fat production finds favor with many. Guernseys probably account for another 25 or 30 percent of the cow population. Ayrshires, which make up about 20 percent of the cows are next most numerous, while Brown Swiss, which are growing in popularity are perhaps 10 percent of the total. Only about 5 percent are Jerseys — a breed that has been losing favor since the creamery era came to an end. Red Devon cattle, the breed which originally populated the county, have about disappeared except for one farm in New Milford, where they are still bred for oxen.

Most farmers are breed-conscious and, especially if they have invested in one or more registered cows of a particular breed, are ready and willing to discuss and argue its merits over others. While herds composed wholly of registered cows are not numerous, this is a growing trend. A decade ago the only purebred herds in the county were those of well-to-do city people who owned the model farms. Nowadays some "dirt farmers" (a label which most Litchfield County farmers take pride in wearing) own registered herds, too. But the most common practice is to have purebreds and grades mixed in a herd. About one-third of all the cows in the county are registered.

Purebreds are valued by farmers not because of their higher production, but because they have higher cash value, because their descendants will bring better prices at sales, and principally because production records are available for several generations on a particular cow, hence giving a farmer more assurance as to what kind of producer a given cow is when he buys her. Beyond this, there is an element of pride in owning purebred cattle and a farmer enjoys being able to say: "Oh, I've got about ten of 'em registered."

Most farms have some young stock around the place all the time, and the majority of farmers attempt to raise most or all of their herd replacements themselves, buying cows only when they run into a streak of bad luck or of bull calves, which amounts to the same thing. Farmers who follow this practice maintain that it is more likely to keep their herds free of disease, it reduces cash costs, and it is a better guarantee of producing capacity and health than the word of a cattle dealer is. But perhaps one-quarter of the operators in the county buy all or most of their replacements. In most cases this practice is followed when the farm is too small to provide enough roughage and pasture, and keeping non-productive cattle would mean diverting some of the limited supply from the income-bearing cows. Sometimes barn space for young stock is lacking, all the available space being used for productive cows. In general, this situation is most likely to occur when a man is "crowding" a small farm, or a small barn, trying to increase his herd to commercial size without expanding his physical plant. Most farmers regard such efforts as unsound practice, and are likely to add: "Around here, you've got to buy all your feed and pay high for labor; if you have to go out and buy cows, and maybe, in a bad year buy

hay, too, 'cause you don't have enough land, chances are you just won't make out."

### **Machinery**

Besides land, buildings and a herd, a Litchfield County farmer needs tools. Their number and variety will depend on the size of his operation, the amount of labor he can get, the crops he grows and, to a certain extent, on his personal preferences. But a minimum list for a part-time or small commercial farm would include: a team of horses, a wagon, a walking plow, a mowing machine, a hay rake (probably a dump rake) a disc or spring-tooth harrow, a cultivator, a milk cooler, and an assortment of hand tools including hoes, rakes, forks, shovels and axes.

A larger farm would probably add to this minimum: a tractor, a truck, a single-bottom or two-bottom reversible plow, a smoothing harrow, a side delivery rake, hay loader or buck rake, lime sower, seed drill, manure spreader, a milking machine, hay fork, ensilage cutter and perhaps a corn harvester. It is reasonable to say that the average farm in the county could get along with these tools. But if he lacks help, is running a big farm, or thinks he can afford more, a farmer may also purchase: a hay baler, a forage harvester, a roller or cultipacker, a bush-and-bog harrow, a reaper or a combine, a corn planter, a manure carrier and a snowplow. Fundamentally, the large and the small farms have the same type of equipment, the chief difference being in the variety of tools and the degree to which various operations are mechanized.

In 1940 only 718 farmers reported having tractors. But the war-time shortages of labor speeded up the trend toward mechanization and in 1945 over 1,100 farmers reported tractors. Horses, however, are not completely outmoded, for there are jobs such as pulling logs out of the woods, and working the steep side-hill pastures and the rocky ridges, where they have a definite advantage over tractors.

### **The Seasonal Cycle of Work**

The land, the buildings, the cattle and the tools of dairy farming in Litchfield County all have their places in a complex series of seasonal activities which characterize the operation of a dairy farm.

When the snow is off the fields and they are beginning to dry out, in late March or early April, the annual cycle begins. Farmers get out with their manure spreaders and distribute whatever fertilizer has accumulated during the months when the snow blocked the fields. Most of it goes on corn ground or hay land, and, if there is any left over it will probably be put on the pasture. Old meadows get most of the animal manure and commercial fertilizers are likely to be used on new seedings.

During April and early May, as soon as the ground has dried sufficiently to be worked, plowing for new seedings is begun. It is followed by one round of harrowing, an application of lime and superphosphate in most cases, and another going over with a disc harrow to work the fertilizers into the ground, and then smooth harrowed. This is not properly called an annual operation since plowable grassland is usually in a 4 or 5 year rotation, with corn for 1 or 2 years, oats for a year, and hay for three years. In late years there has been a growing practice of extending this rotation by letting a seeding go unplowed for 5 or 6 years, or even more.

As soon as the land is properly prepared, farmers seed grass, often including oats as a nurse crop, either sown with the grass seed or as a separate operation. This operation hardly ever takes place before May first, and may be later if the preparation of the ground has been hampered by a wet spring.

In May, cows are turned out to pasture if the weather is decent, and by the middle of this month are usually left out overnight. Between the first and fifteenth of May, generally, corn land is plowed and prepared for planting. Toward the end of May, when he is reasonably sure that there will be no killing frost, the farmer plants his corn, usually with a horse or tractor-drawn corn-planter, sometimes with a jab-planter. Generally speaking, corn is not check-rowed, since it will be cut for ensilage and intense cultivating is not important. Besides, corn-cultivating would interfere with hay making, the next and probably the most important field job on a dairy farm.

Haying usually starts about the second or third week in June, depending on the weather. It is a critical period, and the work is almost always rushed, largely because of the unpredictability of the weather. Farmers wait for bright, hot days, and hope that they will occur at least two in succession, so that hay may be cut one day allowed to field-cure, and gathered up the next.

Making hay is divided into five more or less distinct operations, almost all of which may be performed in various ways depending on the machinery and help available, and on the lay of the land. Mowing, the first step, is done by horse or tractor-drawn mowers, and is the principal operation on the first day. Raking, with either dump or side delivery rakes is the next step, and prepares the hay for loading. Early hay must be turned over the day after cutting; and side delivery rakes rather than tedders are generally used for this purpose. It is in loading that diversity of methods begins to be apparent. Probably the largest number of farmers use a hay loader, and load directly on a truck or wagon. A substantial, and increasing, number use hay balers, and probably one-quarter of the commercial farms in the county use this machine. Hand loading with pitchforks is still practiced on many small commercial and on part-time farms, but it is becoming less prevalent. Perhaps ten percent of the farms in the county use buck rakes, and a handful employ forage harvesters. Following loading, hay is



drawn to the barn on trucks, wagons or buck rakes, and there put into the mow. Excepting baled hay, probably 80 percent of all the hay cut is put in with hay forks and either horse or tractor power. Another 10 percent is chopped and blown into the mow, and the rest is hand forked.

Depending on the weather and the amount of hay to be cut, hay-making lasts until the early part or the middle of July. About this time, a farmer must think about getting ready to harvest his small grains, if any. He either cuts the crop for hay, or reaps or combines it if he is one of the few who are interested in the grain. In any case, he is generally finished by August first, in time for a second cutting of hay if he has any alfalfa.

After a brief respite from pressing field tasks, corn harvesting begins, generally in the last week of August, and extends over about two weeks. About half the corn in the county is cut by corn harvesters and the rest by hand. Unless a harvester is used, the stalks are generally not tied or bundled, but are pitched by hand onto a low wagon and drawn into the barnyard. There they are fed into the ensilage cutter and blown up into the silo.

When the silo has been filled, outdoor work begins to taper off. A farmer may spread a little fertilizer on some fields and do a little fall plowing, especially on the pieces he knows will be wet and hard to work next spring. Along about this time too, he generally devotes a lot of his time to cutting and hauling trees, and getting the wood-pile into shape for the winter. By the time of the first frost in October, the cows are being kept in the barn every night; by the middle of this month they are left in all day, and the relatively quiet winter season is about to begin.

### **The Daily Cycle of Work**

But, winter or summer, year in, year out, there is an even more rigid schedule of activities that keep farmers busy from before dawn till after dark. This daily work rhythm is probably the least variable element, both from farm to farm and on any one farm, of agriculture in Litchfield County. For the dairy cow is a sensitive animal; she must be milked twice a day, every day she is fresh, and if she is milked at regular intervals, both milk production and milk checks go up.

The farm day begins, in winter, at about six o'clock. The farmer gets up and out to the barn to feed grain and prepare his milking utensils. After milking, (generally by machine) he feeds some silage, strains the milk into cans, and puts it in the cooler. Then he is ready for breakfast. After eating, he washes the milking machine, either in the milk-house or in the kitchen, and puts the cups and tubes back into a chlorine rack awaiting their use again that night. He goes back into the stable, gets down some hay, and fills the troughs.

By this time he must see that the milk cans are taken down to the stand where a dealer's truck will pick them up and draw the milk to the pasteurizing plant. This usually means a brief trip in the truck down to the hard road, unless he is one of the fortunate ones who can have their milk called for at the farm.

When he gets back he usually turns the cows out into the barnyard and starts cleaning stable, carrying out manure, and changing the bedding. By the time this operation is finished it is ten or eleven o'clock, and if he has no reason to go to town to buy feed, get spare parts for machinery, or do other shopping, there are odd jobs of repairing, cleaning or moving things around the barn or the out buildings that will keep him busy until noon. Dinner is a heavy meal, and if he has nothing pressing to do for a change, he may take a brief nap; or he may have chores to do outdoors, and if the weather is good, he may mend fences, cut wood, or do other outside jobs. By 3:30 P. M. or a little later, he is back in the barn, getting down hay and silage, feeding grain to the milkers, and filling the bins in front of the young stock and the horses. The milking machine must be sterilized and assembled, and between 4:00 and 4:30 he generally starts milking. Once again the milk is strained into the cans, put in the cooler, the machine is washed, silage is fed, and hay placed into the troughs for the ever-hungry cows. By 5:30 or 6:00 P. M. he has finished these jobs, and, if nothing has broken or gone wrong during the day, if none of the animals are sick, and if there isn't anything he forgot to do earlier in the day, he is ready for supper. Evenings are short, generally, though there may be a meeting, a visit, an occasional trip to the movies, or a few radio programs worth staying up for. But by and large, he is in bed by ten or eleven o'clock, getting ready for tomorrow.

That's the winter routine, seven days a week, Sunday, Christmas, or Aunt Emma's birthday. In the summer there are some differences, though. From May till October he is generally up an hour earlier and he has to go out to the pasture and get the cows, instead of finding them waiting in the barn. He's finished milking earlier (usually by 6:00 or 6:30) and there's field work waiting to be done. He usually doesn't get to clean the stable every day, either. And, late in the afternoon, about 5:00 or so, he has to stop whatever he's doing in the field and go round up the cows for evening milking. They ought to be milked by 6:00 and turned back out to pasture.

Of course, there are variations; there always are in Litchfield. Some farmers milk after supper in the summer so the women folk can get the dishes out of the way and still have some of the evening left before bedtime. Some do it all year around, partly because their wives like to get out to social affairs and want to have a little time to get ready. Some farmers milk three times a day, if the cow is a heavy producer, but this isn't common. Most heavy producing cows are milked first in the morning and last at night to try to keep them as near to 12 hours apart as possible. But all these variations are relatively minor. The important thing is to hold steady hours in each

season, and to milk as nearly as possible at the same time every day.

### **Herd Management**

Besides keeping up with his daily and seasonal work schedules, the dairyman has certain jobs which must be constantly kept in mind.

Some kind of production records should be kept — whether they are the methodical precise measures which the Dairy Herd Improvement Association tester makes, or the simple mental recording of how well a particular cow is doing. For the Litchfield dairyman is alert to production and cost calculation. He is working on a narrow margin of profit, and while a low-production cow may eat as much, she does not return the cost of keeping her and he must cull her from the herd. A cow with a poor production record has no more place on a Litchfield County dairy farm than an inefficient machine has in a modern factory.

The second main job of this sort is maintaining a breeding program oriented toward both providing herd replacements and giving the greatest returns from the milk. Cows must be bred. They should be freshened at the time when they will bring the greatest returns to the farm and, for most farmers in the county, this is interpreted to mean in early spring, just before the herd is turned out to pasture. Under these conditions milk production is highest during the months when feed costs are lowest.

For this reason there is a cycle of high production from May well into the summer, with gradually less milk being made in the fall, and a low level in the winter months, from November through February. This seasonal fluctuation is reflected in price changes, with higher prices in the short season and lower ones in spring and summer.

Various incentive schemes to alter this production pattern have been attempted. While the Dairymen's League was operating plants in the northwest corner of the county, their patrons customarily freshened cows in the fall to get a premium price, and did no milking all summer. The Connecticut Milk Producers' Association tried a plan which penalized over-average production in the flush season and returned premiums from the penalty pool to under-average producers in the short season. This plan met with antagonism from its patrons and CMPA dropped it. Since then, a similar arrangement called the Level Production Incentive Plan has been adopted for Connecticut as a whole by the State Milk Administration.

### **Labor**

On most farms in the county this rigorous work schedule is handled by the operator and what labor he can muster from among his family. Less than one-half of the commercial farms in the county hired labor by the month in 1940, and far fewer than that depended on workers



hired by the day or week — which generally means for haying or corn harvesting. The average number of workers hired by the month per farm was 1.7, and, by the week, during the harvest season, 2.1. Most of the farms which had hired men by the month kept only one, some kept two, and very few had three or more. During the harvest season, and, probably during haying season as well, two extra hands were employed. These figures are, of course, for 1940. During the war an acute farm labor shortage struck the county and comparatively few farmers were able to keep their pre-war labor force. In place of it, they relied more upon machinery and the efforts of the wives and children.

Family labor, even before the war, was an important element in the agricultural labor force. Over three-quarters of all the farms in the county reported some family labor in 1940. For the most part, this labor consisted of sons of the operator, for the role of women in Litchfield County agriculture is limited. Except among the foreign-born population, and, occasionally, the economically depressed, farm women take care of the house, the garden, and feed the farm poultry flock. They almost never do field work, even in the crucial haying season. And they rarely do any barn work, or heavy work of any kind. Some run errands in the car, but infrequently drive the truck or tractor. A girl may do light jobs like those her mother does, and, in some cases, may drive the tractor, truck or team in the hayfield; she may feed the calves and tend the chickens. But, after she leaves high school her status changes and she retreats to her mother's world.

Most farmers in the county would feel ashamed to have their wives or older daughters doing heavy manual work around the place. Even cleaning and caring for the equipment in the milk house is considered man's work, although when the washing up of the milking machine is done in the kitchen rather than the milk house, the farm wife may take a hand. The chief exception to these rather rigid rules are the wives and children of foreign-born farmers, many of whom were reared in the peasant traditions of Europe where women quite properly work side-by-side with men. But the second generation rapidly adopt local ways, and it is uncommon to find native-born women of any ethnic origin doing "man's work."

The foregoing discussion of family labor is based upon the pre-war normal situation. Yet, even though the sphere of girls expanded during the labor shortage, and some were allowed to do milking and otherwise help with barn chores, the role of their mothers was inflexible, and they stayed in the house.

## The Character of Dairy Farming

To summarize this chapter very briefly, we may point out that dairy farming demands not only a particular kind of physical environment and economic geographic location, but also a relatively large in-

vestment in plant and equipment. These factors make for stability of tenure on the land and are connected with the relatively low proportion of tenancy.

In addition, dairying demands certain skills and habits from farmers. The performance of work must be orderly and systematic. Work schedules are rather inflexible, and, regardless of season, the daily work routine must be followed persistently. A variety of skills is necessary for success, and a farmer must not only be able to carry out the actual work routines, operate a variety of machinery, and perform emergency veterinary duties, but he must also be skilled in management and planning if he is to get ahead. The traits of character which dairy farming, as an occupation, rewards, are not those of bold recklessness, speculative adventurousness, but rather those of caution, regularity and a kind of steady persistence. It is scarcely accidental that dairying is so widespread in the "land of steady habits" — the nickname which Connecticut has worn for many decades.



## CHAPTER V

### LEVELS OF LIVING

The people who operate the farms of Litchfield County live comparatively well. The level of living index in the county as computed by the United States Department of Agriculture in 1945 was 173, as compared with 100 for the United States as a whole. Litchfield County is not only well above the national average, but appreciably higher than many other dairy-farming areas. Rural Litchfield dwellers are better housed, better fed and better clothed than most of the farm people of the United States. This advantageous situation arises principally out of two conditions: a higher income level, and a nearness to an urban environment which not only influences the standard of living but makes many items in it more available to farmers.

#### Income

Gross cash farm income in the county in 1939 was approximately 5.15 million dollars, and, by 1944 was estimated to have risen to 11.88 million. Since some 28 percent of the farms in the county sold produce valued at less than \$250 per farm and can be clearly classified as part-time farms or rural residences, a simple average gross income figure (which would be about \$2,100 per farm) is misleading, and gives a distorted picture of the income of families which depend upon farming for their living. It seems probable that the mean gross cash income per commercial farm was as much as \$1,000 higher than the above average in 1939. But incomes vary widely. About 8 percent of all farms had gross incomes of \$6,000 or over, and 68 farms received \$10,000 or more for products sold. The largest number (650) had gross incomes of between \$1,500 and \$4,000. and it seems reasonable to believe, in view of the total gross income estimate for 1944 that, on commercial farms at least, gross incomes would be at least double those of 1939.

It is impossible to determine what share of this gross income is devoted to family living, from the data that are available. There is some evidence in the farm account book summaries compiled at the University of Connecticut from records kept by cooperating farmers. These data must be interpreted cautiously for they are gathered from a small, highly selected group of commercial dairy farmers. For the most part they are medium or large-scale operators, and probably better business managers than are non-cooperators. They are, therefore, not comparable with census data, which include all farms.

Record summaries for 1941 indicate that the average labor income (an accounting abstraction which is approximately the total net cash return after all operating expenses, fixed charges and return on investment have been deducted) on cooperating dairy farms in 1941 was

\$1,855; in 1944 it was \$3,082. In 1941 labor incomes of over \$2,000 were encountered on two-fifths of the cooperating farms; and about the same proportion had labor incomes of over \$3,000 in 1944.

While the evidence is not as detailed and precise as we might wish, it is clear that Litchfield County farmers live and work in a cash economy and that, compared to the rest of the nation, the supply of cash is fairly liberal. The county is definitely a substantial income area as far as commercial farming is concerned, and most Litchfield farm families belong to the economic middle class. Their position in the income pyramid is reflected in their level of living.

### Housing

Probably the most striking and precise evidence for this is in the area of housing and home conveniences. Although most of the farm homes in the county are not new — only 13 percent were built between 1930 and 1940, and some 46 percent were erected before 1860 — they are in good condition. In 1940 only 16 percent needed major repairs and a great many of these were dwellings that were unoccupied at the time of the census. Sheer age has never been considered important in deciding whether to keep or abandon a possession in Litchfield County. The philosophy of “use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without” is popular throughout New England. There are farmhouses which are over 150 years old; and their owners, seeing no reason to abandon them, continue to live in them. However, they see no reason to let old houses become decayed or decrepit. They continue to mend them and to paint them. Paint is especially important, and almost every farmhouse in the county is painted, usually white, and is repainted frequently. Every now and then owners will remodel, adding an ell, or rearranging a few rooms. From time to time they graft onto the old body of the house the improvements and conveniences which applied science has developed.

Consequently, in 1945, some 90 percent of all the farm dwellings in the county had electricity, 87 percent had telephones, 84 percent had automobiles, 86 percent had running water in the house, and 93 percent had radios.

The style of architecture varies a good deal, depending on the period when the house was built. Most, however, are one and one-half or two stories high, inclined to be long and low, with an ell leading off the kitchen and facing the well-worn path to the barn. Wooden clapboard construction predominates, and interiors are generally finished in plaster and the walls papered. The number of rooms and their layout is so diverse that no general description is possible. Furnishings are equally variable, with the possibilities including cheap, gaudy pieces, miscellaneous relics of the Victorian period, and genuine Colonial antiques inherited through the generations and cherished more for their ancestral significance and their utility than for their sale value or their beauty. But whatever their position or their furnishings, the most important rooms are the kitchen and the rooms immediately adjoining

it — the dining room, when there is one, and the back-kitchen, a half-open kind of ante-room to the kitchen. The latter is a transitional area between outdoors and inside where boots or overshoes are removed before going inside, small tools, children's toys, outer work clothes, cans, jars, baskets, bottles and that variety of miscellaneous junk that New Englanders term "culch" accumulates.

The kitchen is the center of activity largely because it is the principal heated room in most farmhouses. Only 36 percent had central heating in 1940, for the older houses are not easily fitted with steam pipes or hot air ducts. Farmers still depend chiefly on the wood stove in the kitchen, and, perhaps a Franklin stove in the parlor or living-room. The fireplaces which were in almost every room in the older houses, nowadays are usually blocked off to keep out drafts from the chimney during the winter and used only sparingly in the spring and fall. More than half the farm families in the county cook with wood and the kitchen range always has a fire in it from September to June. During the summer months a kerosene stove with two or three burners often does much of the cooking (often out in the "back kitchen") and the range is fired up only for canning or a lot of baking.

### **Food**

To be sure, the presence of food as well as warmth helps make the kitchen a popular place. Litchfield people eat substantial quantities of food and have a fairly varied diet. Breakfast and midday dinner are both fairly heavy meals, and, if there is any appreciable difference in quantities served, supper in the evening will be the lightest. There are few, if any, food habits which are distinctive of the county. Milk and eggs, of course, play a large role in the diet, milk being used extensively in cooking as well as for a beverage. Nearly every farm has a family garden, and a cellar full of home-canned vegetables is considered both normal and desirable. Very few farm families try to provide all their own meat supply, although, in a few cases, calves are butchered and a pig or two is kept for home use. Invariably chicken contributes to the meat supply, but, for the most part, farm families shop in the villages or nearby large towns for meat and staple groceries several times a week. Actually, the farm diet does not differ radically from that of nearby cities except, perhaps, for more milk and eggs. It is characteristic that a farm wife in Goshen commented: "Why the farm people eat like anybody else — there's nothing unusual about our food."

### **Clothing**

Clothing, likewise, has "nothing unusual" about it. Work clothes for a farmer are likely to include a pair of heavy shoes, wool or cotton trousers depending on the season, and a blue denim shirt in summer or a series of wool and cotton shirts and sweaters in the winter. On his head there is usually a battered, dusty fedora hat or, perhaps in the summer



a lightweight straw. Overalls are seen fairly frequently but they are by no means a uniform.

The farm wife generally wears a cotton "house dress" and an apron, when she is on the farm and often, in the winter, a sweater, for outside of the kitchen the house is not likely to be very warm.

Children's work and play clothes are patterned after those of the appropriate parent and there is nothing especially distinctive of any age or sex group which is not equally true for the whole northeast region, at least, if not for the nation.

It is when they dress up for a Friday or Saturday night trip to town for shopping or the movies, or when they go to a meeting, a dance, a graduation ceremony, or a church service that farm people become almost indistinguishable from their village and city neighbors, at least in dress. For by and large, the two groups buy their clothes at the same shops. Very few clothes are made at home, except by 4-H sewing clubs, and these are usually "house dresses." While farm women are not likely to be turned out in the height of fashion, and while fads of short duration go relatively unnoticed among them, as a group they look very much like urban and suburban matrons of corresponding ages. In make-up, hair styles and like matters, farm wives are not unusual, although, if anything, they are more conservative and fight shy of "overdoing it" more than their city sisters do. Farm men, too, look a good deal like city men when dressed up. Their suits are likely to be a little older and darker in hue; one suit generally must serve for all occasions. A farmer may appear and act a little more uncomfortable in a vest and jacket than the lawyer, doctor or merchant, but no more so than any manual worker of the urban population, who, like the farmer, is used to comfort and freedom of movement in his daily dress.

### Transportation and Communication

It is not surprising that in the matter of dress and of food, at least, Litchfield farm families should be so similar to urban and suburban families. We have already spoken of the proximity of urban centers to the farms of the county and of the interstitial location of farms among a suburban population. In addition to simple proximity to urban influences, farm people have excellent means of transportation and communication with the urban environment.

Some 71 percent of all the farms in the county are located on hard surfaced roads and only 13 percent on unimproved dirt roads. Black top arteries and concrete highways are spread out throught the county and even farmers who live on unimproved dirt roads rarely have more than a mile to go to a hard road. There are practically no farmhouses which are genuinely isolated, and physiographic barriers to communication or transportation are negligible — the rivers and streams are bridged, and the hills criss-crossed with roads.

Eighty-four percent of the farms had automobiles in 1945 and some without automobiles had farm trucks. For those who did not have, there are numerous small bus lines which interconnect so that, if time is not important, most places in the county can be reached without an extended walk. Two branches of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad serve the county — one running up the Housatonic Valley from Danbury to New Milford and Canaan, and the other along the Naugatuck Valley from Waterbury through Thomaston, Torrington to Winsted. Bus lines run east and west through the county to cities like Pittsfield, Mass., Hartford, Waterbury, Danbury, and Poughkeepsie, New York.

Besides having radios and telephones, the farm population is liberally supplied with newspapers and magazines. There are two dailies and eight weeklies published in the county. From outside the county the *Hartford Courant* and the *Waterbury Republican* in the morning and the *Waterbury American* and *Hartford Times* in the evening are delivered to many farm homes. New York and Boston dailies are readily purchased in many villages in the late morning of the day they are printed and even a mail subscription arrives the same day in most cases. The total list of magazines and farm papers to which Litchfield County people subscribe is very long, and only a hint can be given here. The *Farm Journal*, *New England Homestead*, *Hoard's Dairyman*, *American Agriculturalist*, and *The New England Dairyman* head the list of farm publications, while *Colliers*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Liberty*, *The Ladies Home Journal*, *Woman's Home Companion*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Redbook* and a legion of movie magazines are the most popular general reading. Occasional farmers read *Time*, and the *Reader's Digest* has a considerable following. There are also a host of special publications pouring in from fraternal, patriotic, and civic societies and associations to which members of farm families belong. It is certain that many of these publications get only the most casual attention, especially from the farm operator himself, whose time for reading is generally limited to a brief period in the evening or to very stormy afternoons when outdoor work is impossible. But he probably studies most of the farm journals fairly closely, being especially attentive to items about dairying.

### Educational Level

In addition to reading technical publications of their trade, a good many Litchfield County farmers manage to find time to read a few books and a number of Department of Agriculture and Experiment Station bulletins. Self-education is important to a great many and, especially among the old Yankee stock (though not confined to them exclusively), part of the job of farming is keeping up with the constantly developing technology of dairying. While comparatively few are proficient in the fields of physiology, veterinary medicine, chemistry, nutrition, agronomy, and botany, most dairy farmers have a smattering of applied technology in these fields and are at least aware of the scientific basis for many of their practices.

While formal education is not considered a real substitute for practical experience in most activities which bear upon agriculture, schooling, at least up through the high school level, is considered desirable for young people today. In 1940, the Census reports, 24 percent of the rural-farm population over 25 years had completed high school and about 5 percent had finished college. The overwhelming proportion of adults on farms have completed at least elementary school, through the eighth grade and probably more than half have had some high-school education. Only 8 percent of the farm population had completed less than fifth grade and the percentage of illiteracy is extremely small.

### Health

The level of health, as well as of education, is fairly high in the county. Chronic diseases resulting from nutritional deficiencies are rare, the infant mortality rate is low, and there are no diseases of purely local environmental origin. The usual minor epidemics of childhood diseases occur in particular schools or communities but seldom produce serious results. Schools are rarely closed or large numbers of houses quarantined, for medical facilities are good. In 1946 there were 71 doctors in the county, or about one doctor for every 1,240 persons in the whole population. A majority of the towns have public health or school nursing associations today and every town has a health officer, most often a practicing physician residing within the town borders. There are hospitals at Torrington, New Milford, Canaan, Sharon, and Winsted and in several places immediately surrounding the county. It is safe to say that no resident is more than 15 miles from an adequately staffed and modernly equipped hospital. In the matter of health, Litchfield farm people benefit from being so near a densely settled urban environment which bears so much of the weight of supporting good medical facilities.

### Recreation

In recreation, too, farm people gain a freedom of choice of activities as a result of being near the commercial recreational facilities of cities. Most farm families are within easy driving distance of movies, bowling alleys, dance halls, and the scenes of athletic contests of many kinds. All these things are less than an hour's drive away. In another hour or two, the farm family can be in Hartford to watch a road company play a current Broadway hit, or hear a symphony orchestra perform. A three or four hour trip to New York means almost unlimited opportunities for amusement.

There is also a considerable amount of activity nearer home. The numerous social and fraternal organizations of the county, most of which are made up of people from one town or one village, are constantly holding meetings, giving dances, card-parties, plays, bazaars, and suppers. And this sort of local, non-commercial recreation fills the recreational

time and needs of most farm people. The extended trips to Hartford, Waterbury or New York, or frequent visits to the movies or dance-halls nearby are more characteristic of the young, unmarried group who have finished high school and haven't settled down yet.

### **Achieving the Standard of Living**

Up to this point we have spoken of the level of living in rural Litchfield County as if it were a unitary matter and as if all of the people who lived on farms had equally good houses, food, clothes, health, travel facilities and recreation habits. This, of course, is not true. We have talked in terms of averages and generalities which are but abstractions from living; not living itself in all its colorful diversity. For, characteristically, there is considerable variation in the way Litchfield people live. In 1940 there were 40 farm homes in the county which had neither an indoor nor an outdoor toilet. There are farm people who do not read daily papers, pay no attention to technical bulletins on agriculture, who don't own a car, have never been to New York and who disapprove of all dancing and card playing. On the other hand there are commercial farmers who have tastefully furnished their homes with Colonial antiques, who study textbooks and breed registered cattle for "type," make several trips to New York a year to see a play or hear a concert, buy a new car every year or two, and have college degrees in agriculture or business administration.

The important point here is that the chief barriers to achieving almost any level of living are those of income and taste. Social distinctions such as race, nativity, ancestral stock, political conviction, tenure or occupation do not bar an individual from getting an education, being treated by doctor or admitted to a hospital, dressing or eating as he sees fit, traveling or amusing himself to his taste, any more than they bar him from attending town meeting and voting. There are in the country no clear-cut depressed or disadvantaged groups which can be characterized in single social terms such as these.

Similarly, the gap between standard of living, the configuration of desires and goals which individuals have, and their current level of living depends chiefly on income, rather than on conditions of distance, isolation, ignorance, or social or cultural restrictions on what things certain kinds of individuals may possess or do. To be sure, there are problems of allocation of expenditures and there may be friction within the family as to whether a sum of money should be spent for another cow or for an electric refrigerator, but most of the conflict is held within the family or the individual, and does not become the property of the society.

There is perhaps one generalized conflict relating to level of living, in the county, but, typically it is an intra-familial problem. There are likely to be some differences of opinion, from time to time, on how income is to be spent, whether on farm or home improvements. Farm owners think of their operating plant — their herds, buildings, tools and



land, — as their most important resource, their chief source of security. A fully-owned farm, in good condition, and “kept up,” is the best security a man can have, and it is his duty to see that he achieves this fortunate state. Of course, his duty to his wife and children is to provide them with the material items of a good home. He must make certain minimum items available for this purpose, but over and above these he considers improvements in family living level as secondary to farm improvements. When the mortgage is paid, the barn is tight and sound, worn out or broken tools have been replaced or mended, and the fertilizer bill is running normal, then it is time to think about making the work a little easier in the house. And while farm wives usually follow this reasoning and agree in principle with the attitudes expressed, they may have different opinions about what is necessary on the farm and what is merely convenient — they may feel for example, that an electric stove or a pressure cooker is more of a labor-saving device and less of a pure “convenience” than, say, a power rig saw.

This kind of conflict is encountered fairly often, and farmers, as well as their wives, are conscious of it. But it is considered an individual rather than a social matter and each family is left to solve it in its own way. As usual, the opinion of the society is “hands off.”

In summary it is important to repeat that, while the average level of living in the county is high, there are individual variations of considerable magnitude on either side of it. The point to be stressed here is that the variations are principally individualistic, not social, and they are based on factors of income and/or taste. It is impossible to say that certain geographical, ethnic, occupational, religious, or other such groups have uniform and distinctively different levels of living. Litchfield society is not clearly structured in regard to levels of living and here, as elsewhere, variety and diversity are characteristic.

## CHAPTER VI

### GENERAL FEATURES OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

In every society people are organized or arranged in groups, through which, by common and united effort, they pursue particular goals, gaining the advantage of numbers by dividing the responsibilities, the tasks, and the expenses of the activity. The number and the size of social groups and their diversity in any one society depends not only on its total size but also upon its degree of homogeneity, both as to kinds of people and kinds of goals. Correspondingly, the basis of organization will vary for the same reasons. In a small, primitive tribe with a high degree of homogeneity and few goals, the number of groups is likely to be small and to be based on such factors as family descent, sex or age. As societies grow more complex, and the occupations, residences, incomes, nativity, religious beliefs, and mobility of its individuals become more highly differentiated, the number of groups is likely to increase, and the basis of organization becomes correspondingly complex. At the opposite end of the scale from primitive society lies modern western urban society in all its heterogeneity and fractionation.

Somewhere between the two, yet much closer to the latter, is the kind of social organization which is found in rural Litchfield County. One single trait stands out above all others here: Society is highly differentiated and the basis of grouping is the formally organized special interest group.

#### Formal Associations

The formal association — in the sense of one which has a standard title or name, a board or panel of officers, and a written statement of purpose — is the predominant and characteristic mode of organization. From 4-H clubs up to political parties, Litchfield people belong to voluntary, formal organizations. There are probably more than 500 formal associations and societies functioning in the county. Some of these exist wholly within the county and others are wider organizations represented by local branches or by only a few local members. They cover the range of life experiences and almost all the activities are likely to be carried on under the sponsorship of some formal group. Whether they are engaged in governing a town, giving a dance, fighting a fire, breeding a cow, listening to a speech, or playing a game, they are more likely than not to be participating in a formal association or under its auspices. Nearly every adult in the county is familiar, in a general way, with the cultural paraphernalia of officership and organizational procedure, and is thoroughly accustomed to regulating his social or group activities in these terms. Furthermore, an activity gains status by being sponsored by a formal group and loses it when such sponsorship is withdrawn.



In addition to its obvious facade of formalism, this mode of organization has certain underlying traits which give us clues to the way in which Litchfield society is integrated.

First of all, it is important to note that participation, and especially membership, is voluntary in these organizations. Birthplace, residence, national origin or parentage do not prescribe the social groups to which one might belong. Rather, one's relationship with others is determined by his own interests, desires and self-estimations. One establishes voluntary contractual relations with the rest of society rather than involuntary, organic ones.

A second important point is that almost all of the formal groups in the county have a specific purpose, and a self-prescribed area of activity or responsibility. When a situation changes, a new problem arises, it is more likely that a new association, with a separate identity, will be formed than that an existing organization will expand its horizon to include the new activity. An example of this is seen in an occurrence in the town of Bethlehem in 1945. The Parent-Teachers Association held a meeting at which the speaker discussed juvenile delinquency and suggested that it was a community-wide problem. There had been a number of minor acts of vandalism at the time, which had apparently been committed by local adolescents. This combination of events precipitated a suggestion that group action should be taken to correct the situation and bring both peace to the community and substitute satisfactions to the youth of the town. But, characteristically, the PTA did not, as such, decide to undertake this responsibility. Instead the assembled members and visitors formed a new group, The Civic Association, which had the specified duty and announced purpose of providing supervised recreation for the young people.

This example is not an isolated instance. It has counterparts in other kinds of situations. Thus, although there was a strong, growing Dairy Herd Improvement Association in existence as early as 1934, its purpose was simply to test the butterfat content of dairy herds. When interest in artificial breeding of cattle had risen to the point where action was feasible, in 1939 an Artificial Breeding Association was formed. The DHIA did not expand its activities, but instead, a distinct, new organization with a different title, purpose, list of officers and area of activity, arose.

This proliferation of organizations is important, not simply because it explains the large number of such groups in the county, but also because it casts light on the nature of societal integration. The reason for forming a new organization is that there is not a broad community of interest among the members of an existing organization. PTA members joined the Association in order to build a closer relationship between parent and teacher centering around the school child. The members voluntarily contracted individually to take on certain responsibilities in order to achieve this simple end. But it is uncertain that the same members would all be interested in a new purpose such as sponsored re-

creation. To include such a new purpose might mean that some of the members would be bored or possibly alienated, and the solidarity of the PTA weakened. Rather than risk this, a new association is formed. Those who are interested may join, while the rest are free to hang back. In this way the two purposes are divided, business is transacted at separate meetings, and individuals are committed to supporting a particular program only if they belong to the organization which sponsors it.

In this kind of organizational situation the individual is committed to the course of action only if he desires to be. And rather than participate in a group as a total person, he simply plays one role, or involves only one aspect of his personality and interests. The individual is fractionated into many roles just as the society is differentiated into many groups. Thus, in this society, a man at various times plays the role of parent, war veteran, scientific farmer, Congregationalist, and Granger. But he does so in many group situations, no one of which is made up of exactly the same population as any other, and his total personality is not expressed in nor his total interests served by one group.

Because the individual is bound to a group by a voluntary act of joining and is responsible only for a particular, specified set of duties and because his overall welfare is not bound to the success or failure of one group, he does not feel the strong sense of moral obligation to other participants, the totality of duty, which the members of simpler, more inclusive groups feel. It is impossible to imagine a blood-feud between DHIA and ABA members like the legendary feuds of the Ozarks, and the very suggestion is ludicrous. A man will not fight for the preservation of a group unless he feels that his fate is unquestionably bound up with that of the group.

The fractionation of rural Litchfield County society into voluntary, contractual associations is explained partly by the diversity of the population and the variety of occupations and ways of life in the county. These have already been mentioned, and will be treated further later. Considering the wide variety of interests which people in different occupations and income classes have, it is not surprising that the society they compose is equally highly differentiated and compartmentalized.

The formalistic aspect of organization, the tendency to hold a meeting, choose a name, elect officers, draw up by-laws and follow some (however modified) form of parliamentary procedure is not simply a concomitance of heterogeneity. It is clearly related to a generalized trait of orderliness. Litchfield people do not like vagueness or uncertainty in social action. They prefer to propose a resolution, amend it, vote it and record it in the minutes. After that, action can be taken with the assurance that there is clear-cut understanding among the members affected and agreement and support from them. The orderly way to divide duties and privileges is to assign titles which define the functions to be performed by the office holders. In order to insure a way of dealing with disorderly or refractory members, by-laws are made

up. Then no member can complain of unfair treatment since, after all, all he had to do was to read the law and he would know what he could or could not do.

In addition, voluntary, contractual groups appeal to the desire for independence and individualism which is characteristic of the culture. A man is not bound to join any groups or to attend its meetings — rather, he may choose the ones which are to his taste or to his self interest.<sup>1</sup>

### Localism of Groups

The second main characteristic of rural social organization in the county is its localism. With the exception of certain groups having to do with the technology of dairy or poultry farming, most of the formal associations in the county are town oriented. Their titles usually include the name of the town, their membership is drawn overwhelmingly from within the town borders, and their activities are centered around local town situations.

Most towns, for example, have one or more churches, a Grange, a women's club, a parent-teachers association, one or more youth organizations, and, usually, some sort of men's club. This organizational equipment is minimum and standard. In addition there may be a veterans' organization, a fraternal order, a civic or community association, and a public health nursing association. The total number may be increased by duplicating any of the above-mentioned kinds of groups.

Some towns are organizationally richer than others. But the people of most towns strive for a complete pattern of groups within their borders. When they have to go to an adjoining town in order to attend meetings, they feel vaguely dissatisfied. The commander of a new-formed American Legion Post put it this way: "We used to have to go over to ..... for meetings. They have a bigger post there than we have and they've got their own clubhouse. But it's better this way. We've got our own gang from the town here. No outsiders. All the fellows know each other."

Most local organizations are village-centered and hold their meetings at a hall or public building in the principal village of the town rather than congregate at some open-country schoolhouse or farm home. By and large, both open-country and village residents belong to the same organizations. Associations which are concerned primarily with technical agricultural matters are an exception to this rule of course, but in civic, fraternal, church, and sociability groups, farm and village people intermingle. There is no sharp dividing line between town and country. It seems that the physical proximity of the two, the frequent trips which farm families make to local villages for shopping and buying feed and supplies, and the prevalence of part-time farming all over the county help reduce the social distance between the two kinds of residents.

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<sup>1</sup> As above, the town and the family are exceptions to this generalization.

This kind of localism is the clearest evidence of geographical differentiation in the county. Yet it is more than that. It derives from the consciousness of political as well as geographical communality. A town is not merely an area of land and a name on a map — it is in itself a functional social group. And the tendency for other groups to follow the same boundaries is a reflection of that feeling of unity which town government engenders. It is also another example of the conviction that local control of local affairs is desirable and that local situations are best handled from within the town itself. But not all groups are localistic in scope, and this deserves some elaboration. Most of the special interest groups which are concerned with agricultural technology — such as the Farm Bureau, Agricultural Conservation Association, DHIA, ABA, breeders associations and marketing associations are either county-wide or state-wide in scope and have no local town organization. Groups of this sort may have many members in all towns, and may have directors or other officials in various towns throughout the county, but they do not attempt to maintain local structural units.

The reasons for this situation seem to be threefold. First, the number of the commercial farms in any one town is usually too small to support a highly specialized service like cow testing or artificial breeding. Secondly, problems of farming technology are roughly the same for all farmers, and bear little relation to geographical location and even less to the political and social unity of the town. Thirdly, several of these associations have been sponsored by federal government agencies which are accustomed to working, nation-wide, on a county basis.

There are other instances of organizations formed across town lines, especially in situations where one town alone is incapable of adequately supporting a particular activity. Examples of this are the Public Health Nursing Associations maintained jointly by Morris and Bethlehem and, again, by Cornwall and Goshen. In both cases the nurses divide their time between the two towns on a strict schedule and, seemingly, both towns are benefited.

But probably the most striking instance is that of the Housatonic Valley Regional High School, a large new school located in the open country near Falls Village (in Canaan town) which was built and is maintained by the joint efforts of six rural towns in the northwest corner of the county. This school is the first instance of such inter-town cooperation in the state. Heretofore, each town had been entirely responsible for the education of its resident children and had either maintained its own high school or sent pupils to neighboring-town schools on a tuition basis. The idea of a regional high school was a radical departure from customary practice, and even today sentiment in the six towns is not unanimous. Opponents of the regional high school admit that it is a beautiful building, more adequately equipped and staffed than would have been possible if any one town alone had to support it. But they are quick to stress the disadvantages of it — the long bus trips which all the students have; the fact that it is difficult for students to reach the building outside of school hours, thus mak-



ing it difficult to use the building for athletic practice periods, games, dances, club meetings and so on; the fact that, by not locating in a village within any one of the six towns, the people of all six are inconvenienced and disadvantaged.

Nevertheless, the regional high school continues to operate. Its pupils seem to complain less than their elders about its inconveniences, and there is a growing feeling that it is breaking down some of the separateness of individual towns and that this may be desirable.

As we shall see in a later section, there is additional evidence that localism is weakening as a force in the county. Certainly, today, towns are much less isolated, separate and self-sufficient units than they were in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and this tendency may continue. But town unity is still an important force in social organization and must not be neglected.

### **The Three Main Segments of Rural Society**

A third striking characteristic of the social organization of Litchfield County is the division of rural society into three broad segments — the farmers, the seasonal residents and the resident-nonfarmers.<sup>2</sup>

These three segments differ, not only in number but also in quality from the formal associations upon which our attention has been fixed. They are not voluntary groups with collective purposes, programs, meetings and officers, and their members are not ordinarily conscious of belonging to them. Yet every rural person constantly places his acquaintances, his neighbors and even the people he sees on the street in one or another of these broad categories; if he reflects for a moment, he can also classify himself.

Although, in a sense, they are social classes, the hierarchical and evaluative elements of social class are of minor importance and operate within, rather than between, segments. Members of one segment as a whole do not consider themselves inferior or superior to the others. The segments are more properly called "interest groups," than social classes since the basis of classification is broad and includes not only occupation and income, but also type of residence, way of life, values, attitudes and opinions. Membership in one of these broad segments bears upon participation in formal associations, upon the interest a man takes in local affairs, upon his use of leisure time, and upon the kinds of friends, acquaintances and other informal relationships he has. It colors many phases of life, from the kind of clothes a man wears to the kind of resolutions he supports or opposes at town meeting. But the chief characteristic which distinguishes one segment from another is the reason its members have for living where they do.

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<sup>2</sup> The term "resident-nonfarm" is used here to indicate permanent residents who are not engaged in agriculture as distinguished from seasonal residents, most of whom are also nonfarm.

## Seasonal Residents

Seasonal residents, the easiest segment to delineate, have certain general similarities. Residentially, they are generally from New York City or its immediate environs. Occupationally they are professional men, executives, and large business-managerial people. All have substantial incomes — certainly over \$5,000 a year and more often double that. A few are very wealthy and a number are well-known figures in the professions, the arts, or business. They are likely to be between 45 and 55 years of age when they purchase their seasonal homes in the county and a good many are retired from active business or professional life.

Seasonal residence begins in late April or early May when the family moves up from New York, and lasts until late September or early October when the return trek is made. The head of the family, if he is still active in business, generally appears weekends (often from Friday night until Monday morning) and on holidays throughout the season and usually takes a two to four-week vacation during the summer, which he spends at his Litchfield place.

While in the county, seasonal residents generally lead a quiet, retired sort of life, doing odd jobs around their places or following hobbies and pastimes which suit their tastes. Their social activities are likely to be confined to entertaining other seasonal residents or weekend guests at dinner, cocktail parties, casual sports, or impromptu picnics and like amusements. They have little or no interest in local town organizations and generally stay away from them. They are usually generous contributors to drives or fund-raising activities and much prefer to give money than to give time. Their contacts with the year-round residents who are their neighbors, provisioners, or domestic servants, are likely to be fragmentary and casual — of short duration and rather superficial.

Seasonal residents may attend town meetings and take an active part in the discussion if a piece of legislation affects their personal interests. But the important town meetings are likely to be held in the winter when the seasonal residents are back in New York and it is inconvenient or impossible for them to be present. If they do attend they will probably be aligned in opposition to the farm people of the town on almost any matter, but especially on the expenditure of money. For example, while the farmers want hard surfaced roads to their farms, summer people are more likely to settle for improving a dirt road — for they want roads to be good enough to travel in all weather but not so good as to invite traffic. Again, since seasonal residents rarely have children in local schools they are likely to take little interest in education.

Now and then the seasonal residents become interested in a particular local problem and, especially if they are retired and not just vacationing, put in large amounts of time and effort on it. If they are conservative in their plans, do not try to "push themselves" or "hurry the town along," they may be granted leadership and their ideas given



recognition. It is more common, however, for them to be ignored, repulsed and outvoted by both farmers and village people, especially if the plans are considered extravagant or inappropriate to local conditions. A recent example of this kind of conflict occurred in 1945 in a small rural town of 1,600 which has a single village near one border. Many of its people live on open-country farms and many are seasonal residents. At a town meeting in May a resolution was offered to build a community recreation center which would cost a total of \$100,000. A well-informed village resident commented "Some of the New York people ..... got behind this recreation center idea and put it across. They had their crowd down at the meeting ..... It may be a good idea but it's too expensive. But they don't seem to think about things like that. They're not practical about finances and such ..... They had it in the resolution that the upkeep and care of the place should be entirely the town's responsibility, but they didn't give any estimate of what the upkeep would be ..... And when I talked to a couple of them afterwards, they admitted they *didn't* know. And they didn't have any plans or anything — didn't even know whether it would be brick or stone or what."

Since a large number of seasonal residents have purchased land (often a going farm) in the open country, they have farmers as neighbors. But comparatively few seasonal residents who buy farms continue to operate them. The majority simply turn barns into garages, hobby-shops or play rooms, and let the fields go to grass or brush.

The few seasonal residents, usually the wealthy ones, who continue to farm their land do so as a hobby or, as it is alleged by some "dirt farmers," because "they found a way to get some fun out of losing money. It don't matter to them how much they sink in a place. They can take their losses off their income tax and it amounts to not costing them anything."

Such seasonal residents usually start their places with registered cattle, build model barns, buy expensive equipment and hire managers to oversee operations. Some try rather inappropriate practices such as raising beef cattle; others run a regular dairy for a while and then give it up. Still others become serious students of agriculture and particularly of purebred stock and begin to breed their herds for quality stock rather than simply for milk production.

In all, the group of "rich men's farms" is numerically small. There are probably not more than 100 such farms in the county and their commercial importance, in terms of milk sold, is not great. Yet the self-styled "dirt farmers" who get their living from dairying have strong feelings toward them. While they admire quality in farming and would like to own such places themselves, they resent some things about "rich men's farms."

This resentment is based chiefly on the threat which "hobby farms" represent to the "dirt farm." At the present time, there is, if anything,

a milk shortage. But dirt farmers know that the milk market will ultimately contract again and, at that point, the "rich man" will be able to compete unfairly with them. "Anybody can sell milk cheap if he doesn't care how much it costs him to make it" is an often-heard sentiment. Again, in the matter of labor, "dirt farmers" are angry and resentful because the "rich-man" can (and allegedly does) pay such high wages that he bids labor away from them. Again they complain of "unfair competition" because the "rich-man," "*he* don't have to make both ends meet and he can go sky-high for labor. What's *he* care how much he loses? All he can see is he wants that man and he's gonna get him." But, underlying both of these rational arguments is a core of scorn and resentment which arises out of the "dirt-farmer's" knowledge that the fine buildings and the sleek, registered cattle did not come out of the earnings of the farm they are on, and are not the product of the long, wearing hours and the faithful daily performance which give him his living.

But this sort of antagonism is limited to comparatively few instances, for the relationship between seasonal residents as a whole and farmers is more spatial than social. They have little in common and the mutual feeling between them is more likely to be indifference than anything else. Some farmers mildly dislike "New Yorkers" and resent their taking the land out of agriculture and breaking up the old homogeneous farm neighborhoods. For it is this intermingling of seasonal dwellers and resident-nonfarmers among the commercial farm population which makes the farmer feel that his way of life is being crowded out by the advancing city. Farmers like to see flourishing, well-kept farms around them; they enjoy the communality of interests, work and recreation habits, opinions and attitudes which arise out of a solidly agricultural region. And they are ill at ease when agriculture declines and is pushed out by mere play and enjoyment of leisure.

## Farmers

The segment of society which gets its living wholly or partially from the land in Litchfield County is, as we have seen, comparatively small, but diverse. It is composed of people of many ethnic origins, of varied religious beliefs, who run farms of all sizes, work at all sorts of occupations besides farming, and have varied incomes and levels of living.

Taken together, they have one interest in common — the land and its products. But their relation to the land and to the economy and society which rise from it is not the same. Some are in a dominant position, others are not. There is some social and economic stratification within Litchfield's farm segment, but it is not so clear-cut or so marked as in, say, the Cotton South, the Corn Belt, or in the Western Specialty Crop Region. Although in Litchfield County dogmatic statements about social classes are misleading, perhaps a few loose generalizations are possible.

At the top of the pyramid are the larger (50 cows and over) farm owners who have lived in the county for a longer than average time

and have devoted all of their lives to farming. They are good technicians, adequately educated (though few have gone to college or had formal schooling in agriculture), good businessmen, diligent and methodical. They keep up with new developments in dairy technology, are the active leaders in Farm Bureau, Dairy Herd Improvement Association, Artificial Breeding Association and Agricultural Conservation Association. They are most likely to be of old Yankee stock and Protestant, but neither national origin nor religious belief bar a man from achieving status in this group and being recognized as one of the "farm leaders" provided he demonstrates financial success and an interest in technology. At Farm Bureau meetings these men are likely to take the lead in discussion, and their opinions are usually respected for they have proved themselves successful in manipulating the economy. This does not mean that they must amass large sums of money. To do so would invite suspicion. Rather, it means that year-in, year-out, they consistently operate in the black, keep their buildings and herds up and take good care of both farm and home. Managers of large "rich-men's" farms fit into this group too and are accorded status because of their skill in farm management rather than their possessions. Managers are, however, open to a certain amount of jocular "kidding" about how much money their employers lost at farming in the last year. Also included in this group are a few men who have operated small, but wholly commercial, farms successfully for a great number of years, and whose accumulated weight of practical experience is valued as much as, or more than, scientific academic knowledge.

Just below this top group is the large body of middle-class families who own and operate smaller (20-50 cow) dairy farms, depend chiefly on their own labor and that of their families and are inclined to follow rather than lead the advancement of technology. They have fewer pure-bred cattle, fewer machines and less modern buildings. Having smaller operations, a smaller capital investment, and, generally, lower net incomes, they must be more cautious about experimenting with new techniques and usually wait for some larger, more daring operator to try out hay driers, balers, ladino clover or fall freshening of cows before they adopt it. In this group nationalities are diverse, although there are likely to be few foreign-born, chiefly because they lack technical skill, and prefer to use the traditional peasant farming methods which they learned early in life than to try to accommodate to modern American ways. The descendants of the foreign-born usually enter this middle class.

The chief differences between this group and the upper stratum are the smaller size of enterprise, the lower degree of technical skill, the smaller operating capital, the more conservative (or traditional) farming methods and inferior equipment. It is also true that many middle class farmers have not been farming all their lives and have not lived in the county so long. Here again, farm ownership is not a requirement. A young tenant, just starting out is likely to be in this class, especially if he is a relative of a middle or upper-class owner.

At the bottom of the pyramid is an assortment of part-time farmers, chronic tenants, farm laborers, and unsuccessful or marginal owners who are losing money, laboring under a heavy mortgage, having trouble paying debts and taxes and are constantly making errors in judgment about cattle, machinery or crops. Most of this latter group work small farms on poor land, with inferior equipment and a minimum of the skill and know-how which middle and upper class farmers value so highly.

Part-time farmers fall into this category generally because of the small size of their operations, because they usually take little interest in and cannot apply the elaborate technology of dairying which is the chief concern of the commercial farm group, and also because the part-time farmer does not have his undivided interest in milk prices, feed costs, farm labor wages, marketing orders and all the other economic aspects of commercial dairying. His opinions on labor unions, social security, unemployment compensation and other controversial issues are likely to be different from those of commercial farmers. In short he is a man who is marginal both as to the farm and the industrial economy; and full-time farmers are not willing to admit him to full equality with them.

"When a man gets to be fifty years old and he's still a tenant you begin to wonder what's the matter with him," remarked one local farm informant. This comment sums up the attitude which most farm owners have, namely: that farm ownership is the normal goal, and while there is no stigma attached to a young man's beginning in farming as a tenant, if he does not achieve ownership after a while, his diligence and competence are suspected to be lacking. It is for this reason that habitual tenants are classed in the lowest stratum of the farm segment of society.

The position of farm laborers arises from the fact that they lack property and, hence, take orders rather than direct their own operations. Certainly young men who are just beginning in agriculture and working either on the home farm or on that of a relative or close friend are accorded special status and are regarded almost as junior partners, or as advanced students. But men whose chief occupation is farm labor and who do not make efforts to own or rent farms are considered inferior in competence and ambition and are usually believed to be irresponsible and to need close supervision. In addition, a contributing factor may be the usual estimate of farm labor as a vocation; most people in both farm and nonfarm society regard it almost as a last-resort job, and take little or no pride in holding a hired man's job or in doing it well.

There are some other factors associated with class position besides skill, size of operation and income but the differences between groups in these other respects are not so noticeable. Between the upper and the middle group, level of living is not noticeably different. The furniture in the upper class home may be a little newer or may be better matched in design and appearance. There may be an electric refrigerator and electric stove instead of an icebox and wood range. The family's



automobile may be a year or two newer and the farmer and his family have a slightly greater variety of clothing. But their fundamental consumption habits are the same. The gap between these two classes and the bottom stratum (except for industrially employed part-time farmers) is much wider. In the latter group homes are not kept so well painted or repaired, furniture may be sketchy, and decorations few and showy. Walls will be unpapered, or chipped and faded, and bare floors instead of rugs are common. The automobile, if any, will be an old Ford or Chevrolet, bought second-hand and in need of repairs. Clothing is likely to be cheap, worn and lacking in quantity and variety.

By and large, differences between classes also find reflection in the area of social participation. The officers of formal organizations are hardly ever drawn from the lowest class, and, though not consciously discriminated against, the latter do not belong to as many, or as important, organizations and usually attend meetings less frequently. They usually play little or no part in the farm-technological organizations, and their wives are infrequent attendants at home demonstration meetings. They are hardly ever elected to town office, and when they are it is usually in some unimportant capacity.

This characterization of the lower class in the farm segment of society does not mean that there is a large, permanently disadvantaged group who are discriminated against by others. Actually, comparatively few people may be so classified in the county and even they may win limited status from others if they comply with the demands of the society. If they work hard and regularly, are faithful in keeping promises and agreements and are reasonably peaceful and law-abiding, they will be accorded polite respect. If a young man or woman raised in this class shows ambition, frugality and "steady habits" he can permeate the class boundary and achieve at least middle class status. And in no case are lower class people considered inferior by nature. The opinion of the farm segment of society is that a man's class is determined by his own competence, ambition and personal reliability.

### **The Resident-Nonfarm Segment**

The members of the resident-nonfarm segment, except for the small number of "aristocracy" in several of the villages, have far closer and more frequent contacts with farmers than with seasonal residents. Not only do most members of the two former groups meet each other at frequent intervals on the village streets the year-'round, but they are also likely to attend meetings of the same civic, fraternal, religious and sociability associations. Though they may differ widely in occupational interests, income and tastes, they have one bond in common which distinguishes them from the "New Yorkers" — they live in Litchfield County the year around and they make their living there or in nearby urban centers.

Occupationally the resident-nonfarm segment is a diverse group as we have seen. And more striking than simple diversity is the fact

that brass-workers live where there is no brass factory, machinists where there are no shops, and bankers where there are no banks. Thus a great many resident-nonfarm people must commute to work and live in the country, not for convenience or necessity, but because they prefer a rural or village residence.

The resident-nonfarm way of life is different from that of the seasonal resident in several respects. First, the non-farmer is more likely to live in or on the edge of a small village. If he lives in the open country he is more likely to have a house and garage on a small lot than to live on an abandoned farm. He is more likely to have a garden and some chickens on which he depends for part of the family food supply. Secondly, he lives much nearer his work than the seasonal resident and keeps his family as well as himself near the source of income the year around. Thirdly, he is likely to have a lower income and a job that ranks lower in the occupational scale. Lastly, because his fate is more completely and intimately bound up with it, the town and its problems, activities and associations, occupy much more of his attention and time.

The members of the resident-nonfarm segment of society are not a homogeneous group any more than farm people are. Three broad social classes can be distinguished among them.

The upper class is a small, rather self-conscious aristocracy of wealth and family. Almost always its members are old Yankee stock whose families have lived in the community for several generations. They are likely to be Protestant, probably Episcopalians or Congregationalists. A large proportion of them are retired or live on the income from investments. A few are professional people and a few more are active executives in nearby cities. They are likely to be well-educated, widely traveled, and more urbane than most of their fellow townsmen. By and large, they are aloof from formal associations and confine their social activities to other members of the same class, or to contacts with the seasonal residents with whom they feel they have much in common. Aside from attending church services and town meetings, they generally avoid participation in activities around the village. Although other non-farm people accord them verbal respect and deference, there is considerable feeling that this "aristocracy" is snobbish and cold. Actually, this so called "aristocracy" is very small in most rural towns, and often consists of not more than two dozen people.

Just below the "aristocracy" in status is the vast, heterogeneous middle-class, composed of merchants, dealers, local professional men, skilled industrial workers and clerical and sales people who work either in the village near their homes or in a nearby large town or city. They are people of moderate means, of diverse national origins, religions, and levels of living. But taken as a whole, they make up the largest part of the membership of formally organized associations. And, more often than not, they are the leaders, the officers and committee members of such groups. Organizational activity is, as we have remarked, village-



centered, and it is not surprising to find that the officers (and hence, the most active and interested members) of most associations live in or near the villages. It is also not surprising when we compare the limited, relatively short working day of nonfarm people to that of farmers. Rising earlier and quitting work later, the farmer finds little time to spend on recreation and sociability. Among village dwellers, the activities of formal associations seem to play a larger role than they do among farmers. Farm people seem to be content with this state of affairs and have relinquished leadership to village people in most all formal-associational affairs except town government and the purely technical-agricultural associations.

The third social class in the resident-nonfarm segment of society is composed principally of unskilled and occasional laborers, domestic servants and, at the very bottom a miscellany of indigent relief cases and chronically unemployed.

In summary then, we may repeat that the social organization of rural society in Litchfield County is characterized by a large number and great diversity of formally organized associations, by a voluntary, contractual type of integration, by a still strong but waning emphasis on local town orientation, and by a rough division of all rural people into three broad interest groups, each of which has some features of social stratification within it. In reviewing this last-named characteristic it is well to remember that, like any set of generalizations about Litchfield County, the analysis of social classes is oversimplified. Reality is much more complex, and numerous exceptions to the above characterization of the social classes can be found.

## CHAPTER VII

### LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL UNITS

From a consideration of the general, overall features of social organization in rural Litchfield, we come now to a detailed examination of the kinds of groups which, taken together, constitute the society.

#### Town Meeting Government

Throughout this report frequent reference has been made to various towns and town meetings and it should be obvious that these territorial and political units, peculiar to the six New England States, are most important elements of the social structure. They are historically prior to the county and have always been more powerful and important.

Originally the town was two things — a unit of settlement and a unit of settlers. It was more than simply a governmental unit — it was the only organized grouping of individual settlers outside of the family, and their sole technique of collective action. In 1720 the settlers of Litchfield town held their first town meeting. They elected government officials and voted to erect a meeting house, which would be used for both secular and religious meetings. They also voted to appropriate a share of land for a minister, and funds for his salary, and appointed a commission to select and summon the preacher. In 1724 they appropriated funds to purchase a basin for use as a baptismal font. In 1725 they voted to build a schoolhouse and appropriated money to pay the salary of the teacher.

The important point here is that all these things were done by the settlers in town meeting, acting in their role as citizens. They did not set up a separate organization, such as a congregation, to care for religious matters; the town meeting voted the action and raised the money by taxation. Nor was the school built and maintained by private subscription, by a school association or a school district. The town meeting was a governing unit, a religious body and a school district combined, and identical to each of them.

Such a unification of roles is possible in a very homogeneous society, of course, and as new settlers began to arrive, equipped with different religious beliefs, the solidarity of the church was weakened. After many years of quarreling between the members of various sects the Congregational Church was disestablished by the State Constitution of 1818. Thus was the first recognition that the individual towns were no longer homogeneous units and it was the only important loss of power suffered by town government for many years.

During the depression of the 1930's, towns lost some of their control over relief expenditures.

The financing of relief programs placed so much strain on town budgets that state and federal funds were needed. Certain programs instituted under the Social Security Act of 1935, such as old age assistance, aid to dependent children, and aid to the blind, also required a uniform statewide administration. As a result social workers hired and directed by the state now determine eligibility for many kinds of assistance and the amount paid is fixed by law. Towns still finance and administer general "outdoor relief" and every year the grocery bills and rent of a few families or individuals must be paid.

Historically, roads have been built and maintained by the individual towns. State highway maintenance was begun perhaps two decades ago, but the most important part taken by the state began in 1931, when the Rural Road Improvement Act was passed, granting state aid money for roads. The decision of how to expend these funds remains in the hands of the town meeting and the selectmen, and it is often easy to tell when a town border has been reached because the surface of the road changes.

To a large measure, law enforcement has passed out of local hands. The problems introduced by the automobile so increased the size and cost of the staff and equipment of police forces, that most rural towns could not afford adequate protection. Today only five towns, and the two cities, maintain their own uniformed police, and the constables who are still elected in all towns are content to let the professionally-trained and well-equipped state police handle most of the law enforcement.

Although law enforcement has largely been taken over by the state police, the administration of justice remains in town hands, except for major crimes. In most towns a trial justice sits periodically to hear the cases brought in by the state police — mostly traffic violations, plus an assortment of assault, breach of the peace, breaking and entering, and theft cases.

When major crimes are involved such as grand larceny, murder, or rape, the offender is brought before the trial justice of the town in which the crime was committed, and bound over by him to the Superior Court of the county. The powers of the trial justice are limited by law, both as to the amount of fine and the length of sentence he may impose.

Education still remains almost entirely in town hands. Except for the Regional High School, a special case, there are no school districts separate from towns in Litchfield County. The school board or board of education in each town is elected by town meeting and has almost complete control of public education for the children of the town. The school board, usually acting through a principal or superintendent of schools which it hires, has the power to hire and fire teachers, to determine educational policy, to prescribe curricula, and to expend the money allotted it by town meeting. Comparatively few restrictions are placed

on the power of the school board by the State, and the State Board of Education can usually only advise or encourage local school boards to adopt new policies or change old ones. The chief functions of the state board consist of such advising, of administering certain state grants for education, the allotment of which is determined largely by statute, and of enforcing the minimum educational requirements which are also statutory. Groups of towns may federate loosely and be assigned a Supervisor of Rural Education whose salary is paid by the state, but they may accept or reject his advice, and may withdraw from such a federation at any time, without being penalized for this action. Here again, the individual towns have the upper hand and hold the reins of power firmly.

The matter of town versus state powers is made more clear through an understanding of the system of representation in the House of Representatives, the largest branch of the General Assembly. The 272 members of the House represent towns, not numbers of people. They are, therefore, more vitally concerned with the matter of town powers than are the 36 members of the Senate who, elected from districts which may be but a fraction of the area of one urban center or which may include a dozen towns, are more concerned with group interests than with the towns as such. House members can readily assess the problems of town administration and, when necessary, delegate powers to the state either for the duration of a particular crisis or more permanently.

Town elections are held annually in October in all but four towns (which hold biennial elections) and a meeting is generally called at the same time to vote upon the budget. At least one other meeting, usually in March, is called for the purpose of allocating money for road construction or improvement. In addition there may be special meetings convened at any time to take up unusual problems or to vote on a newly suggested course of action.

Town meetings are ordinarily interesting to attend for there is almost sure to be at least one major difference of opinion. All qualified residents or property owners in the town are privileged to speak on the topic at the meeting and a large number of them use this privilege. Opinions are usually delivered frankly and with conviction, and sentiment is likely to run high. But this does not mean that the citizens are rowdy or violent. Town meetings are conducted in an orderly fashion, and there is an orderly method for quelling all disturbances.

Differences of opinion generally arise over either the raising or the spending of money, and in most arguments the particular local group who expect to benefit from an appropriation find themselves lined-up against the rest of the town who are opposed to raising the tax rate. The identity of the two sides varies considerably with particular resolutions although, in general, it is said that the farm segment of the town is more often on the latter than the former side. The problem for the politician in most town meeting controversies is to persuade a majority that they will benefit from the action he suggests, or convince



them that the money can be appropriated without increasing the tax rate or cutting another appropriation. Either course of action is likely to excite suspicions and many town officials would agree with the first selectman of one rural town who expressed his philosophy of local government as: "My job is to spend as little of the tax payer's money as possible: No, not as wisely as possible, just as little as possible."

The officials who carry on the routine of town government between meetings usually number between 20 and 30 but a handful do most of the work. The brunt of the load usually falls upon the first selectman, who supervises road maintenance, administers poor relief, signs orders for a wide variety of expenditures, listens to complaints and suggestions, and decides what action, if any, to take, plans the budget, and does a hundred other small jobs. Sometimes the second or third selectmen take over some of these functions. The town clerk draws the next most arduous assignment, keeping land records, vital statistics, selling marriage, dog and hunting licenses, registering deeds and certificates of all sorts, and performing odd jobs of paper work and question answering. The remainder of the work of running the town's affairs is divided among the Board of Education (or School Board, which consists generally of six citizens), the tax collector, the three assessors and the treasurer.

From this brief description it is evident that being a first selectman is a responsible and time-consuming job and it is not surprising to find that in a great many towns, especially small ones where the selectman's salary is insufficient to live on, the position is filled by men who have retired from active business and have incomes of their own. Most often a selectman is a retired farmer or merchant, although surprisingly enough, some are active farmers. In these cases a good deal of the work load is borne by the second and third selectmen for a full-time commercial farmer can scarcely spare enough time from his daily routine. Another notable characteristic of first selectmen in the county is that they are usually of old Yankee stock and they have lived in the town a long time. For the job requires an intimate acquaintance not only with the physical and human characteristics of the town but also with its cultural pattern and social organization. Litchfield people want their officials to be thoroughly familiar with the environment, to be not only living but working in the town, and trustworthy. Such qualifications are sought among the long-time residents who have won their spurs in the society. It is rare that a seasonal-resident or even a commuting suburbanite is first selectman. Good selectmen generally have lengthy tenure in office, too. When a town gets a man who "does a good job" it hangs on to him.

Most town office-holders are year-round residents who have lived in the community for a number of years. Newcomers and seasonal residents generally are not elected to office of any kind, but are most likely to begin their political careers as town constables or justices of the peace. If they have lived in the town for a few years and have "shown an interest" in children and education in informal conversation,



and in discussing pertinent resolutions at town meetings, they may be elected to the school board. But the offices which involve responsibility for collecting or expending town funds are reserved for the long-time residents who have established reputations not only for honesty, but for reliability, caution and carefulness. Townspeople are worried less about the possibility of theft or embezzlement than about carelessness, rashness and poor judgment.

Although they have been gradually losing power for many generations, the towns have resisted centralization and have relinquished any part of their control with regret. For townspeople see in centralization a threat to their way of life, a loss of local control over local problems which they prize so highly. The comments of a long-time resident of a small village in the western part of the county are typical of the attitude which many rural people have toward the State-regulated relief program, for example:

"I was for the Old Age Assistance when it started, because I thought it would help the respectable people who had had the misfortune to lose their savings, without making them go to the Town Farm or have to be boarded out with strangers — But the trouble with the OAA is that the same trash that always did have to be supported are getting the OAA and the respectable people aren't getting enough — If the relief were back in the hands of the town it could be distributed a little better, and I think the respectable people *should* get a little more — than the trash."

This clear-cut feeling that the local officials can and should differentiate the deserving from the undeserving poor is one side of a characteristic conflict between local "justice" tempered by moral evaluations and personal opinion, on the one hand, and the distant, impersonal, mechanical application of the law on the other. The opposite viewpoint is illustrated well in the story of a difference of judgments between the state police and a local trial justice.

A young naval flier "with an excellent war record and from a family that had an excellent record" came home on leave and rented a light airplane at a local airport. He flew over his home village and for twenty minutes or more stunted spectacularly and skillfully, but most of the time at less than 500 feet, in violation of the state law. "The whole town was out there watching him." When he landed he was arrested by state police and brought before the local justice who dismissed the flier with a warning. A state policeman told the story, commenting: "The whole town thought it was a wonderful show and they were proud of him. All I could see in it was the danger." and, later, "We have orders that our job is not to force anything on the courts. We find the violators and bring them in, and it's up to the courts to mete out justice. But it's hard to take sometimes."

Although it appears that the governing of rural areas has become more centralized than in the last two centuries, towns are still the most

potent kind of locality groupings. Below the town level, there are no important formally-organized territorial units except for boroughs and a very few property owners associations. The former are limited-power units set up for governing densely settled villages and there are only two in the county, both in Litchfield town. Property-owners associations have sprung up in a few places where real-estate promoters have fostered "developments", usually small clustered summer cottages around a lake; these associations are usually formed for the purpose of improving roads, and providing a few other services. But they have little importance for, or effect upon, the permanent rural society.

### The County

Above the town level of organization, there is the county. But in comparison to its role in other parts of the country, the county government in Litchfield, as in New England generally, performs negligible functions. It is secondary to the towns, both historically and in the scope of functions. The county was not organized until 1751, years after most of the towns had been established and settled. It is chiefly responsible for the administration of certain child welfare laws, and for the administration of justice above the town level. It also serves as the administrative unit for such agencies as the State Agricultural Extension Service (this is discussed in chapter X).

The welfare of orphaned or neglected children is an area in which county, state and town all play a part. Such a child, if under six years of age, is a town ward. If over six (or upon reaching six years) the child becomes a ward of the county. Furthermore, if the requirement of four-year residence in one town has not been fulfilled, the child becomes a ward of the state, regardless of age. There are complex arrangements regarding the responsibility for cost of care of wards, but in no case do town and county divide the cost. Rather, there is a clear-cut division of total responsibility based on age.

The Court of Common Pleas, which hears small civil suits and a few kinds of criminal cases, and the Superior Court which hears major civil and criminal cases, are both organized on the county level. The sheriff of the county is chiefly concerned (with the assistance of deputies) with serving civil processes, caring for the county jail, and assisting in Superior and Common Pleas Courts procedures.

A third county function has to do with roads. While the county constructs or maintains no roads itself, it exercises a limited supervisory power over the individual towns in this way: If a property owner in any town lives on a road which is not being maintained to his satisfaction, and if he cannot persuade the selectmen to act upon his complaints, he may appeal to the county commissioners. After investigation, the commissioners may request the selectmen to act and, if this fails, may order them to make the repairs or maintenance deemed necessary, and

charge the cost to the town. This right is exercised infrequently and there are comparatively few commissioners' orders issued in a year.

Not only does the county have few functions, but as a governmental or territorial unit it has relatively little meaning for its residents. They rarely think of calling on the county for help and there is no county seat. When a man is asked where he lives he generally names his town or his village. A farmer will most always identify his residence by town or, if more specific location is necessary, by town and distance and direction from the nearest village. Even when he is far away and is being asked to orient his home town, he is more likely to say "in the western part of the state" or "outside of Waterbury" rather than "in Litchfield County." On none of the main highways leading into the county are there signs proclaiming the county boundary — instead they read "Town Line — New Hartford" or New Milford, Colebrook, Salisbury, and so forth. In almost all ways the county is an unimportant unit of organization, distinctly secondary to the town.



## CHAPTER VIII

## CHURCHES AND SCHOOLS

In addition to local government, there are two institutionalized groups which exert considerable influence on the behavior of rural Litchfield County people. These are the churches and schools, and one of their chief characteristics is that, unlike the institution of town government, they do not incorporate all of the people in their particular areas.

## Churches

Statistical data on churches and church affiliation are rarely as detailed, precise, or up to date as we might wish, and judgment must be used liberally in the interpreting of the data that are available. The 1936 Census of Religious Bodies and the list of clergymen that is available in the latest issue of the Connecticut State *Register and Manual* are the chief sources of information on this topic, and neither gives a full picture of the religious life of the county.

However, it is clear that religion, as measured by church affiliation and participation in services includes only part of the population. In 1936 there were some 52,000 church members (about 62 percent of the population) in the county. Of these, well over half (58 percent) were Roman Catholic, 17 percent Congregationalists, 12 percent Protestant Episcopalians and 3 percent Methodists. The remaining 10 percent were scattered among a number of Protestant sects, and the Russian Orthodox Church. A large part of the Catholic population is probably concentrated in the cities of Winsted and Torrington and in the industrial towns of the Naugatuck Valley. It is almost certain that the rural population is predominantly Protestant, although the largest single church membership is undoubtedly Catholic.

Exact data on the distribution of active churches are not available, but, on the basis of resident clergymen, it seems that the Congregational church is the most widespread. There are resident Congregational clergymen in 20 of the 26 towns in the county, and resident clergymen of the Roman Catholic and of the Protestant Episcopal Churches in 13 towns. In addition there are Methodist ministers in 9 towns.

Most towns have more than one denomination represented, and only four have no resident ministers at all. Of course there can be an active congregation without a resident minister. In Bethlehem, for example, the Catholic and the Protestant Episcopal Churches are both served by clergymen in adjoining towns. In such cases as this, the usual practice is to have one service in each town each Sunday rather than to alternate Sundays, for the distances between churches are short in most cases. It is certain that some sort of religious service is available to almost



every Litchfield resident either in his own home town or in an adjoining one.

But, available or not, many Litchfield people do not attend church services. As we have seen, only a little more than half the population belong to a church. Furthermore, among the Protestant sects, at least, a great many "members" do not attend church services regularly. According to the reports of the ministers of several representative rural churches (Congregational, Methodist and Episcopal), the average attendance at church service is between 25 and 35 percent of the total membership. "About two-thirds of my audience on most Sunday mornings are women," one Congregational pastor stated. Seasonal residents "rarely attend services — they come up here to get away from it all and they don't seem to take an interest in religion," reported another rural minister. There is also a certain seasonal fluctuation in attendance, with high points being reached in the spring and fall. Peak attendance occurs on Easter Sunday in most churches.

The various churches, furthermore, attract different segments of the population. One minister put it this way: "The Episcopal Church gets most of the summer people and the ex-New Yorkers who are living here all year-round, as well as a few towns-people. The Catholic Church gets most of the foreign-born, especially the Irish, Italians, and Polish. The Methodist Church and the Congregational Church both depend upon year-round residents in the middle income groups." A Catholic priest in the same town reported that his congregation was "not well to do. A lot of them are laborers, gardeners or farm workers. Most of the wealthy upper-crust around here are Episcopalians."

This sort of stratification of church membership seems to be found in all parts of the county where there is both a sizeable number of people in the corresponding classes and a sufficient number of churches. In several of the thinly-settled towns, however, the principal difference between churches is that the native-born of English, Scotch, German and Swedish descent attend the Protestant church, while foreign-born (and their descendants) of Polish, Lithuanian, Russian, Italian and Irish origin are Catholics.

The Protestant-Catholic distinction is a strong one and seems likely to last. Sectarianism among Protestants shows some signs of weakening, although in a good many towns two or three Protestant sects continue to struggle for existence individually instead of uniting into one church. In many cases, their congregations are not large enough to maintain a completely satisfying church program, and some are too small to maintain a resident pastor.

Yet these separate churches persist, apparently because of an attachment to the local church, and a rather vague, unreasoned fear of loss of individuality through union. That it is not a question of belief which impedes union is evident by the statements of several Protestant ministers that doctrinal differences were not the divisive element. Said one

Congregational minister, pastor of the only Protestant church in the town: "We have no creed. We are more of a community church and we leave creed up to conscience and intelligence of the members. Of the last eleven members we took in, only one had a Congregational background. There were six Episcopalians, two Methodists and one Baptist."

Union among Protestant sects seems to be hampered by personal loyalty to local church groups, particularly among the older age groups in the Yankee stock, by social class differences in some towns, and by administrative conflicts. The question of who shall have control of the local church is an important one, especially when the union is proposed between a Congregational or Methodist church, on the one hand, and an Episcopalian, Baptist or Lutheran church on the other. In the former group, the local church body usually retains control, but in the latter an authority higher in the hierarchy, namely the appropriate bishop or the synod, demands recognition as the controlling one. This sort of administrative conflict is a major obstacle, and even when union has been accomplished it may impede functioning. One church which was federated some 23 years ago out of a Congregational, a Methodist and a Baptist congregation still has two boards of church officers — a Federated and a Methodist, the latter being retained in order to comply with the conditions of an endowment which was left to the church. If the Methodist board were dissolved the monies of the endowment would revert to the Methodist Board of Missions.

Religious affiliation is not a matter which sharply divides rural people, in the ordinary daily contacts of rural life. While many of them feel vaguely uneasy in the church of another sect or faith, this does not prevent them from uniting efforts in times of emergency. During the disastrous flood of 1936, in New Hartford, special lunches were served to school children whose homes had been inundated, by the co-operative efforts of the Sisters of St. Joseph's Convent and the Ladies of the Congregational Church. Again, since the Catholic Church in Litchfield borough was destroyed by fire several years ago, the facilities of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the borough have been used for most Catholic funerals and weddings; and all of the churches in town have contributed to the rebuilding fund.

Sectarian lines are often ignored in sociability activities. In one rural town, an Episcopal rector reports: "It's a common pleasantry to say that you can't tell who is giving the church supper by who is in the kitchen." Among young people especially, religious lines are often wiped out completely. Vacation church schools have been organized in recent years and children from all denominations, and in some instances from different faiths, are brought together. Leaders for these schools are usually recruited from more than one church. Older youth organizations are frequently non-sectarian in composition. A striking example of this is given in the action of the young people's group of the Congregational Church in a rural town where it is the only church of any faith. This organization had been affiliated with the national Christian Endeavour Society until the national Society discovered that two of the

officers of the local association were Catholics and raised an objection. "The members talked it all over and decided to separate from Christian Endeavour rather than to cause friction among our own group," the local minister reported.

The influence of the church calendar on society is not great. For example, although Christmas and Easter are almost universally observed in the county, Lent is not marked by a great change from normal routine. "We ask the various organizations in town not to hold any meetings during Lent," said one minister, "except, of course, for their business meetings, which they have to hold." Another pastor reported: "I tried to hold an extra service during Holy Week, in the evening. I got a real preacher for it, but it fell flat. People just wouldn't turn out. Their attitude seems to be: 'Well, if you've got to hold an extra service (other than Sunday morning) once in a while, all right. We'll go along with you. But let's not overdo this.'"

Outward manifestations of emotionalism in religious worship are almost entirely lacking. Sermons are calm and reasoned, the service is restrained and dignified. One young minister who had been brought up in the Southwest remarked: "When I look back on it, I'm amazed at the sentimentalism I used to preach in my little church back home. It would never go up here. You don't just tell a Bible story — you've got to take an idea and give it a twist. It's more intellectual." Another young preacher who had been trained in an evangelical atmosphere in a Western state remarked: "No one in my church would dare to utter an 'Amen' out loud if I made a good point. Everyone would turn and glare at him." It is difficult to estimate the importance of religion as a source of inspiration or emotional security, for most Litchfield people keep their feelings to themselves.

In many respects people seem to consider church attendance just like attendance at any other social organization in Litchfield County. One minister remarked: "Church is a Sunday proposition to most people. They attend or don't attend in the same way that they would go to or skip a meeting of the Grange or the Legion." But, yet, if it were suggested that the churches be abolished, most Litchfield residents would be horrified. For whether they attend one or not, most people regard their churches as "a good thing for the community." The church seems to be a familiar, customary part of life and people are afraid of what life would be like without it. To lose the church might stir things up; it might loose a hidden brake on disruptive forces. A Yankee would fear a town without a church just as he would distrust a man without a conscience. Both are likely to be unpredictable. This attitude is perhaps a reflection of the generalized pragmatic conservatism of the culture: the church probably does some people good and certainly harms no one; it is a force for stability and for peace, therefore it is worth retaining.

Ministers are not held to any rigid requirements of behavior, or particular standards of dress or action. A young Texas-born preacher remarked: "They don't expect so much conformity up here. Down home

I always had to wear a hat whenever I stepped out of the house. Here no one cares. And down there I couldn't have kept a deck of cards in the house; last night I was showing card tricks to some of the kids." There are few specific behavior taboos of the sort that are common in some other parts of the country. For example, a minister in one town is able to sponsor a town baseball team which plays on Sunday afternoons without receiving censure from the congregation.

Although the minister is comparatively free to engage in recreational and social activities, there would be considerable objection to his meddling in economic and political affairs — areas in which long residence and permanence in the town outweigh the prestige of the ministerial role. He may help run the Men's Club, join civic associations, and fraternal orders. He may organize youth groups, sponsor athletic programs and lead community singing. But let him lead a fight in a town meeting to build a new school, to rezone the town or otherwise "improve" the community and he is immediately resented as a busybody.

Probably the leading role played by the church in the lives of most Litchfield rural people is that it provides a basis for a considerable number of auxiliary organizations, including Sunday Schools, older young people's groups, men's clubs, and especially women's societies.

"Religion in New England rests on a solid foundation of layer cake," said the wife of one rural minister. "The sugar shortage has greatly impeded the spreading of the gospel. We're a couple of hundred dollars behind just because we can't get any cake to sell." This is not simply a jocular remark. One of the sturdiest and most enduring of all church-sponsored groups is the cake-selling Ladies' Aid (or Ladies' Guild, Women's Club, and so forth). Almost every church in the county, Catholic or Protestant, has such a group whose chief function, ostensibly, is to raise money for church maintenance by holding cake sales, putting on church suppers and also catering at the suppers of non-church organizations, by having booths at fairs, and by selling various home-sewn articles at church bazaars. The women's organizations of Catholic churches also hold bingo parties to raise funds. Most women's associations have achieved a considerable measure of independence. They usually decide how to raise money, how much is needed, and then, in making a gift of money to the church, direct how it shall be spent.

In addition to their fund-raising function, women's church organizations are a vehicle for religious education, sociability, the dissemination of a good deal of practical information about home living and about the community. They often become the most useful agency in the community for organizing appeals and drives for various charitable causes — such as food and clothing relief for foreign countries, and also Thanksgiving and Christmas contributions to local "deserving poor." Private charity, in rural Litchfield County, is the province of women and probably the church organizations carry a larger share of this work than any others do.



The membership of women's organizations in churches runs between 25 and 50 persons in most rural towns. It is likely to be made up predominantly of the older married women, who, freed of caring for small children, can find the two to four afternoons a month which are devoted to meetings. Some associations have tried holding evening meetings alternately with afternoon ones in order to attract younger women, but this is not a standard practice. In most cases, members of the women's association are also church members of the appropriate sect. This is not an inviolable rule, however, and particularly in cases where there is but one Protestant Church in the community, the members of various sects belong to one women's association. In one town the Ladies' Aid of the only church (Congregationalist) was reported to include at least one Catholic member, as well as "a whole lot who never go to church at all."

Almost all of the churches have Sunday Schools which meet either before or after the regular church services. Although Sunday Schools are usually organized for both children and adults, it is the children who dominate the activities. In some communities church schools are flourishing and sometimes they attract more participants than the morning worship service; in others, interest in the Sunday Schools has lagged and only a few children attend. Professional and especially lay leadership is an important element in their success. For example, the Sunday School in one rural church suddenly came to life when an energetic young woman was appointed superintendent. Under her leadership the enrollment tripled and the Sunday School became an active force in community affairs. Occupational and class lines are often bridged by the Sunday School, since in the case of children, social distinctions are often less meaningful. More than one newcomer to the locality has said, "I got acquainted through the friends my children made in Sunday School."

Older youth groups are also found in many churches. They have a number of functions. In addition to bridging the gap between Sunday School attendance and participation in religion as an adult, they perform a secondary function in introducing young people of the opposite sexes to each other in a socially approved situation. They also stimulate intellectual as well as religious education through organized discussion of current social and political, as well as moral problems.

The outstanding characteristic of church youth groups, like other youth groups in this rural society, is their relatively short life and their constant need for reorganization and revivification. This seems to be related to age grading and to small populations from which each group may draw. There is not always an even geographic distribution of young people who can be included in the membership of any one organization. During adolescence and youth, age-grading is, of course, very important, since interests and capabilities change so rapidly. Age grades must be narrow and the supply of available personnel in one age-group often runs out, in any one town or village, with the result that membership dwindles or vanishes, functioning is impaired or halted, and



the association wastes away until a fresh supply of members can grow up to it. This cycle becomes even more evident when the further division, into sects or faiths, narrows the personnel available for any one group. This may help explain the action of the church youth group mentioned above in seceding from the Christian Endeavour Society; for to them survival as a group, which meant retaining all of their 15 or so members, was more important than hierarchical affiliation.

Comparatively few churches have active men's organizations, and there does not seem to be a widespread feeling that they are needed. The functions performed by the few which exist are chiefly sociability and educational-informational. They provide an opportunity for men to listen to a speaker on a topic such as prison reform, cancer research, or the war experiences of a local veteran, and to exchange views with each other on matters of local interest. Ordinarily, men's clubs do not have the charity-drive and money-raising orientation which are characteristic of women's associations.

### Schools

Formal education has always occupied a prominent place in Litchfield County. Historically the school was the second public building erected by most towns, and, ever since public education has been available to all citizens of any town in the county. Today, the educational level of the rural population is comparatively high. More than half the population have completed eighth grade and almost one-fifth have finished high school. It is common for most boys and girls to attend high school and to finish some sort of a course, whether general, trade or agriculture. In addition, a small percentage (5-10) of the graduating class of most schools enter college, most often the University of Connecticut.

Every town in the county maintains an elementary school system, usually a single school in or near the principal village of the town. Some fairly thickly populated towns have an elementary school in more than one village, but the one or two room rural school has virtually disappeared, and been replaced by one large centralized building.

Not all towns have high schools, however. Nine towns, most of which have populations of 2,000 or more, maintain their own high schools and, in addition, there are six towns in the northwest corner of the county which are federated together in a unique regional high school which will be discussed later. The remaining 11 towns send their students to adjoining towns which have high schools, and pay their tuition out of town-appropriated funds. Thus every educationally-qualified youth in the county has a high school education available to him, although, for many, it involves considerable bus travel. In addition to these facilities, there is a special trade school for metal and woodworking trades, in Torrington, and any qualified pupil may choose to be sent to this school, his tuition paid by his home town.

As has already been pointed out, education is the responsibility of the individual towns which are aided and, to a very limited extent, directed by the state. With one exception, towns "go it on their own," in the local phrase, but this exception represents such a departure from custom that it is worthy of special attention.

The Housatonic Valley Regional High School was erected and is maintained by the cooperative efforts of six town school boards, those of Salisbury, Sharon, North Canaan, Canaan, Cornwall and Kent. While this may not seem like a great effort to anyone accustomed to consolidated school districts in rural areas, it is a major departure from tradition for Litchfield County people. In order to build this school the individual towns had to yield their jealously defended power of individual action and form a single, financially-responsible school district. A special enabling act of the state legislature was necessary for this purpose, and a total of fifteen years elapsed between the time the idea was first discussed publicly and the day the school opened its doors in 1939. The story of the development of the regional high school offers in microcosm a picture of educational organization in the county and is worth examining.

The original suggestion — to consolidate the efforts of several rural towns, each of which was too small to operate an adequate, modern high school (or, in some cases, any high school at all), at one large plant — is said to have been made at a meeting of the Salisbury League of Women Voters in 1924. The idea remained in the discussion stage for several years, but was actively pushed by two women of Salisbury, one a former school teacher and one, significantly, a newcomer to town from a western state. The latter was not only familiar with consolidated schools of western states, but also ignorant of and unimpressed by the value placed upon individual town authority. A rural school supervisor, provided by the state, also helped to push the idea.

In the early 1930's four of the present six towns were operating small high schools, most of which were understaffed and offered only a narrow range of subjects, and two had no high schools at all. Consolidation of elementary schools was becoming popular at this time. Improved roads and better vehicles were making it more feasible to close the one-room schools and transport pupils to village centers. This was important, since it provided a use for the already going high school buildings if a consolidated district should be formed. The small high schools were becoming overcrowded and proving expensive to operate, and there was general dissatisfaction with the situation in many quarters.

Following the appearance, in the Legislature, of several bills enabling joint action by two or more towns to establish high schools, the Salisbury Board of Education at a regular meeting in 1935 heard the suggestion of a member that they seriously consider some plan of consolidation with adjoining towns. They voted to invite the school boards of four adjoining towns to meet with them and discuss the matter informally. As a result, an investigating committee was appointed, with

members from each board, to study the possibilities of consolidation. This committee reported favorably on the matter and then watched a series of bills go to the Legislature, all of which provided some form of consolidation. The final bill, in 1937, left the burden of activity upon the individual towns, providing as it did, that any three or more of the towns of Canaan, North Canaan, Salisbury, Sharon, Kent and Cornwall might, by vote at a special town meeting in each, establish a regional high school district which was to have the power to purchase a site, build and operate a high school to serve the whole district. Such a school was to be administered by a Regional High School Board composed of one person from each town who was to be appointed by the Board of Education in his town. The cost of the building and operating expenses were to be pro-rated among the towns on the basis of the number of pupils each year from each town. During the summer of 1937 the joint committee publicized the proposed consolidation in all six towns and that fall, at special town meetings, all six accepted, thus forming the new district. A federal grant was secured to supplement town appropriations in order to erect a completely modern, well-equipped structure, and in April of 1939 the cornerstone was laid.

There are several points in this story which throw light upon the role of education in rural Litchfield County. Most striking perhaps, is that an educational institution was able to overrule the individuality of towns to an extent that no other ever has. The precious autonomy of local control was yielded in order to provide better school facilities. Secondly, the point was frequently made, in presenting the appeal to voters, that the new school would provide a range of subject matter that could not be made available in small single-town high schools. Especial mention was made of the fact that courses in business, home-making and vocational agriculture could be offered, and that better laboratory equipment could be furnished for them in the joint undertaking. The third, and most fundamental point of all, is that the desirability of providing better educational facilities was scarcely ever questioned; the problem was almost always seen as one of means rather than ends.

It is evident then that formal education is highly valued by most rural people in the county, and that the responsibility for providing it is considered to rest upon all citizens. Furthermore, education is held to be desirable not only in and of itself, but as a means to an end — making a better living. The vocational aspects of schooling are not to be neglected.

In 1945, the 64 graduates of the Regional High School received six different types of diplomas. Twenty of them received the General Studies diploma, and 15 the Classical one. But 11 were graduated in the Commercial course, 8 in Home Economics, 4 in Industrial Arts and 2 in Vocational Agriculture. This distribution of graduates reveals one of the most interesting aspects of education in the district. Although this is one of the best farming regions in the county, and perhaps 15 to 25 percent of the students at the high school come from commercial

farms, only a small percentage are being trained to remain in agriculture. For many, education is a route out of farming and into a non-farm way of life. The graduates of the commercial course usually get jobs locally as secretaries, typists, or clerks in nearby village business establishments. If they have relatives living or working there, they may go to Hartford to get jobs with the insurance companies. About half a dozen of the graduates of the classical course go to nursing school, "not because they have deep interest in nursing, but because it's an inexpensive education and a good chance to get away from home," reported one teacher.

But education does not consist entirely of classroom work. Extra-curricular activities such as teams, clubs, and purely sociability events, especially dances, occupy a good deal of attention, and most students, in writing about their careers at school, express either gratification at having participated in such activities or disappointment that they haven't been more active. It is quite evident that social behavior is learned in these situations, and they provide important opportunities for young people, especially those who live on relatively remote farms, to become gregarious.

Because the Regional High School is located in the open country rather than in a village, all of its students must be transported by bus. Since the buses, provided by the individual towns, must also carry elementary school students on the same trips, they leave the school comparatively early in the afternoon and thereby reduce the time available for extra-curricular activities. As a consequence, most teams and clubs hold practices or meetings during the school day, in "activity periods." When there is a game, a play or some other event held in the evening or late afternoon, transportation must be provided by private automobile, usually that of the coach, director or other teacher-leader and whatever others he can muster from among the faculty or students. This situation reflects fairly accurately the community attitude toward non-classroom activities; that they are not a matter of public concern or responsibility, but are purely individual. When the town has provided instruction and the facilities for reaching it, responsibility ends. And, for the most part, high school functions do not draw large crowds of townspeople. Football games, plays or concerts are attended chiefly by students and relatives of the participants — they are not of community-wide interest. And this applies to other high schools in the county, not merely to the Regional school.

Perhaps because it is relatively isolated and can be conveniently reached only by car from anywhere in the district, the Regional High School does not serve as a center for non-school activities. Some farmers' meetings and occasional dances are held there, but "the *old* school, now the grade school in most of these towns" is used more frequently for such purposes.

But even if it has meant less use by non-school groups and has brought about some curtailment and a good deal of inconvenience in



carrying on extra-curricular activities, the Regional High School has had at least one salutary effect on pupil morale — it has given all of its students a feeling of belonging. Under the system of sending students from towns with no high school into adjoining towns, there is often a vague dissatisfaction expressed by the visitors over real or imagined discrimination against them on the part of the home-town students. While there is a certain amount of good-natured banter concerning the merits of one another's home towns, most students at the Regional High School feel at home there and express satisfaction in this. There is also an undefined, but growing, conviction that, while individual town identities are not lost, the school has reduced the isolation between towns and has promoted mutual understanding. So far, little clear-cut regionalism has appeared, and there is no visible evidence of the widening of the area of inter-town cooperation into other activities.

Most of the points that have been made about education at the Regional High School apply equally well to other parts of the county. Education is largely, though not wholly, vocational.<sup>1</sup> Homemaking is taught at six of the nine other high schools, and vocational agriculture at three of them. Commercial courses are not uncommon in the larger schools. Extra-curricular activities are stretched out over a longer period of time, and students who live in the village where the school is situated generally have an edge on those from farther out. Farm youth, both because they usually have work to do around the farm when they get home, probably take less part in extra-curricular activities than non-farm students do.

But even among the farm students, whose labor is almost always useful on the home place, education is of primary importance. The school year is normally not arranged with farm seasons in mind. It opens in early September when the corn is scarcely in the silo, and closes in June after haying is under way. Yet comparatively few farm boys are kept out of school to work at home. Only in times of severe labor shortage and seasonal crises of farm work peaks, do farm youth miss classes in order to "help out." Formal education is considered of primary importance and it is believed that a boy or girl should get "all of it that's coming to him."

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<sup>1</sup> It should perhaps be mentioned that in this county are located a number of the famous private preparatory schools for boys, including Hotchkiss, Kent, Taft, Guntery, Romford and Canterbury. The overwhelming majority of students at these schools are drawn from urban upper and middle class families who live outside the county. These schools do not exercise any appreciable effect on the rural youth of the area and have only occasional and rather superficial relations with the public schools. Therefore, a discussion of them is omitted from this report.





## CHAPTER IX

### FORMALLY-ORGANIZED SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

As we have already pointed out, one of the outstanding features of rural social organization in the county is the large number of formal associations for advancing special interests and as vehicles for social action. We turn now to a more detailed examination of the particular types of associations and describe some of their characteristics. They fall naturally into two principal categories: the agricultural-technological, and the civic-sociability types.

#### Agricultural-Technological Associations

The distinguishing features of agricultural-technological associations are that they draw their membership almost entirely from the commercial farm group and therein from the middle and upper classes; they are organized on a county-wide or state-wide basis rather than being confined to individual towns; and their functions are principally to disseminate technical information about agriculture and to promote the economic welfare of commercial farmers.

##### The Farm Bureau

Of first importance here is the Litchfield County Farm Bureau. Organized in 1914-15, it was first suggested (characteristically) at a meeting of a civic association, the Men's Forum, in Litchfield town. It grew gradually and fairly steadily and in 1946 had 2,002 members. Almost every commercial farmer in the county belongs to it, "except a few who get peeved because the county agent don't come around and see them often enough," according to one officer. About 75 percent of the membership are "real farmers" and the remainder principally business men, some part-time farmers and a few seasonal residents, especially those who are operating farms. The reason most merchants and business men join is given in the words of a small village store-keeper: "I join the Farm Bureau every year. I think it's a good thing for farmers. I get a little help from it once in a while on my garden or chickens and it does me no harm with the farm trade to have the (Farm Bureau) sign up in the store. They know I'm with 'em and support their organization."

Most of the commercial farmers who belong to the Farm Bureau are middle and upper class members, who regard it as a valuable source of help and advice, as their agent to keep them up to date on technological developments, and as their chief means of collective expression to the Legislature, the State Milk Administrator, and the various agencies of the federal government whose actions affect agriculture.

For most of its members, the annual dues of five dollars is a modest sum and they consider it a good investment. "Occasionally we find some poor fellow who can't spare the money and we don't trouble him," reported a Farm Bureau officer, "He'll join later, the chances are." The same man added "You don't have to be a member to get help from the Farm Bureau, but we figure if you do come around and get help, you should be willing to pay a little and join, but you don't have to pay to get it."

The reason for this emphasis on the relation between membership and assistance can be traced to the unusual nature of the relationship between the Farm Bureau and the Extension Service. These two agencies have such a close working agreement that they have become almost identical, at least in the minds of many farmers.

The county agent and his staff are maintained jointly by the Farm Bureau, through dues it collects from members, by the State and Federal Extension Service out of public funds, and by an allotment from the County Commissioners' funds. Thus a cooperative extension service is formed and both private and public agencies work together on a common program of "instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics" which deals both with agricultural production and with marketing problems. The memorandum of understanding between the Farm Bureau and the Extension Service specifically provides that county agents "are to perform service for the benefit of all the farming people in the county whether members of farm bureaus or not; and are to confine their activities to such as are appropriate for public officials to perform under the Smith-Lever Act and supplementary state acts. The county agents will aid the farming people in a broad way with reference to problems of production and marketing, and in the formation of farm bureaus and other cooperative organizations, but will not conduct membership campaigns, solicit memberships, receive dues, handle farm bureau funds, edit and manage the Farm Bureau publications, or manage the business of the farm bureau activities which are outside their duties as extension agents."

In practice, this working agreement amounts to centralizing Farm Bureau and Extension Service activities in one staff, and under one program. The county agent acts as a source of information and advice, and as an organizer and leader of the demonstrations and meetings which form the principal element of the educational phase of Farm Bureau work.

The activities of the Farm Bureau consist of holding daytime meetings in the winter months, evening barn meetings in the spring and fall, twilight meetings during the summer and presenting regular weekly radio talks the year round. Series of day meetings on various topics are held in several different parts of the county over a period of a few weeks. They usually take place in Grange or other public halls, begin at about 10 a.m. and end about 3 p.m., neatly sandwiched in between the diurnal milking periods. There is usually a luncheon given at noon, and served by the ladies of the local Grange or the women's organiza-

tion of a local church. Frequently a home demonstration meeting is held at the same time, in another part of the building so that farm wives may accompany their husbands and save an extra trip at a later time. The subject of the farm meeting is likely to be pasture-improvement, hay production and harvesting, feeding and selective breeding of dairy cattle, or the care and repair of farm machinery. Women's topics are generally home maintenance, the repair and decoration of the house, kitchen planning, canning practices or, from time to time, a discussion of the features of a new home technical development such as deep-freezing for food storage.

The general plan of both meetings is similar. The county agent or home demonstration agent gives a brief preliminary talk, introduces the lecturers (usually state extension service specialists) and manages one or more panel discussions which have been arranged.

The evening meetings, held in barns in poor weather and outdoors in fair, take place on the farm of a Farm Bureau member. They generally begin at 7:30 or 8:00 p.m. after evening milking is done and supper eaten, and last until 9:30 or 10:00, when most farmers begin to get sleepy and start thinking about the coming work day. Barn meetings are likely to emphasize feeding or breeding of cows, while twilight meetings usually stress pasture improvement or hay production. In either case, the county agent talks on the herd or the pasture being viewed, points out its features and invites discussion. If there is a state extension specialist present, he follows the same pattern. No refreshments are served at the evening meetings and no women are present.

It is notable that these meetings are not regular weekly or monthly affairs and are not formal meetings of a local Farm Bureau Club or Home Demonstration Club. Rather they are scheduled "as needed," when an appropriate situation arises. When the county staff and Farm Bureau Committeemen feel that certain kinds of information or advice are needed, or when a number of requests for information on the same topic are received, a meeting or series of meetings is scheduled. Meetings are announced by mail, in the Farm Bureau News, over the radio or, sometimes by an informal grapevine of the directors and local leaders who have been selected by directors as the most effective agents for spreading information in their towns. Such meetings are usually adequately attended. The county staff feel that this kind of organization results in reaching as many people as local clubs with regularly scheduled meetings do. As the Home Demonstration agent put it: "This way you get the people who are interested in what you're going to talk about; they come because they want to learn about it, not just because it's the regular meeting day. And you also avoid the trouble that most organizations experience, of having to hold a meeting because it's the regular day for it, even though there is no special topic of interest. There is none of this: 'We've got a meeting coming up and what shall we do for a program?'"

The absence of formally organized Farm Bureau Clubs on the local level is related to one additional feature of cooperative extension work which is worthy of note, namely, that a great deal of the work of the county staff, and even, sometimes, of the state staff, is done by individual contact with single farmers, rather than by group techniques. It is more common for specialists to visit particular farms and give individualized advice than for them to arrange for group activities or projects on, say, a local community or neighborhood basis.

The underlying reason for this approach is probably the heterogeneity of farms and farmers which we have mentioned frequently, and the fact that, in any locality, farmers are interspersed with non-farm people to a considerable degree. For these reasons it is difficult to gather a compact, homogeneous group of farmers, all of whom face the same problems, in any part of the county, and group work is awkward, especially in purely agricultural-technological matters.

In home demonstration work, the situation is somewhat different. Apparently farm women (and also non-farm women) have more homogeneous interests and problems than their husbands do. For, although there are few formally organized local extension groups for women, the home demonstration agent has often been able to work through existing local organizations such as Ladies' Aids, Women's Clubs and analogous groups, and demonstrations and lectures have been offered in connection with the regular meetings of these local associations.

In addition to their primary educational purpose, such meetings as these have important derivative functions. They are a medium for the informal spread of news and gossip, the exchange of ideas and the collective formation of opinions and attitudes. At such meetings opinion among farmers on such topics as production subsidies, market administration, price control and so on, are formulated, unified and reinforced by mutual discussion. In addition, business deals are set up and the informal buying and selling arrangements are begun or concluded. Lastly, there is a generalized sociability function — simply meeting and greeting acquaintances and neighbors who "pass the time of day," or "swap lies," or "keep up with what's going on."

The other important function of the Farm Bureau is to act as an agency for collective political and economic action. Most often this action consists of making clear to state representatives what the position of commercial farmers is on a particular bill, and in urging the milk market administration to increase the price paid to farmers. "We have members (of the Farm Bureau) who are members of the Legislature and we generally keep them posted on what's going on so they can do something about it," said a Farm Bureau official.<sup>1</sup> "When something special comes up, the State Farm Bureau usually takes action on

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<sup>1</sup> In two recent legislative sessions about one-third of Litchfield's representatives have given their occupation as "farmer." It is probable that most of these and some others in addition are Farm Bureau members.



it. But we often get together a delegation from the county here and go over and talk for it. The county agent generally keeps us posted on things like that."

As often as not "things like that" are hearings on milk price conducted by the state milk administrator. A delegation is almost sure to attend such hearings. "We fight for a better price for the farmer," a Farm Bureau official stated. Of course, under the terms of his employment, the county agent must be restrained in his political activity, but he is able to attend most milk hearings and to assist farmers in the preparation of technical data to support their position.

The internal structure of the Farm Bureau is simple. Its officers are elected at an annual meeting which is generally attended by about half the membership, and which often features a dinner and a dance in addition to the business meeting. The officers, assisted by the county agent, nominate three directors, usually two men and a woman, from each town in the county, one from each of the two Pomona Granges, and 13 directors at large. These nominations are usually confirmed by the members. The duties of the town directors are largely advisory, though they are sometimes called upon to assist the county agent in administrative matters, particularly in arranging meetings.

Officers are most likely to be drawn from the upper and upper middle classes of the farm segment of society, and are generally longtime residents of the county who are commercial farmers, and who have taken an active interest in agricultural technology and marketing problems. The local town directors are chosen for their "ability to get a group together and put over a meeting" and are likely to represent a good cross-section of the commercial farm membership. Nonfarm people are not usually elected to officership or directorship, although an exception is found in the office of treasurer who, in 1946, was the president of a local bank.

In practice, the county agent performs most of the tasks of program organization, although the officers and directors are important in policy making and are responsible for the political activity of the Farm Bureau. The leadership of the organization remains largely in the hands of the same class from year to year, and the position of the organization on controversial matters usually reflects the interests of the middle and upper class farm owners who make up the largest share of its membership.

The Dairy Herd Improvement Association and the Artificial Breeding Association are probably the next most important agricultural-technological organizations in the county. Although the DHIA is older and is organized on a county basis while the ABA has become a statewide organization, there are great similarities in the type of activity they engage in, their membership, and their relationship to the county agent and his staff.

### Dairy Herd Improvement Association

Organized testing of individual cows for butter fat production began in 1916 in Litchfield County and there was an active association until 1930 when members began to drop out because of depression-enforced economies. The present DHIA in the county was organized in 1934 from among the members of the old one, and has flourished since then. It now has some 130 members (each member represents one herd) and hires seven testers who are paid on a fee basis by farm members.

The purpose and sole activity of the DHIA is to provide cow-testing service to members and to assist them in keeping records on individual cows so that they may have a sound, exact basis for selective breeding of highly productive cows and for culling inefficient producers. Association-wide herd records are summarized and published annually, so that a farmer may compare the performance of his herd with county-wide standards. In addition, the monthly newsletter of the association as well as the Farm Bureau News list the 10 high cows and 10 high herds for the month, and it is felt that the prestige attached to being so listed spurs many members. An annual field day in the fall, held on the farm of a member, features cow-judging contests, with prizes for the winners. Besides regular members, 4-H Club boys and vocational agriculture students are invited to compete.

The membership of the organization is made up principally of farm owners who have large herds and are commercial milk producers. Most herds are over 25 milking cows in size and there are a few of the largest herds in the county (upwards of 100 milkers) in the association. Not all herds are large, high quality ones, however; there are several members with small, relatively poor herds who are testing in order to increase their production. On the whole, however, members are likely to be the more successful, large owners who are favorably disposed toward scientific practices and who depend on DHIA to help keep their herds efficient.

Although DHIA is nominally a separate organization, whose members elect their own officers, pay dues and fees for testing, in practice it is almost a step-child of the county extension staff. The dairy specialist on the extension staff was the first cow tester of the new DHIA, and today he acts as overseer and handles all the routine business of the association; receiving and checking testers' reports, arranging testing schedules, keeping financial reports, making up the newsletter and even, sometimes, hiring new testers when there is not time enough to get the officers together. Such policy-making as is necessary is usually done by the officers, but to most farmers the DHIA is rather closely identified with the county extension staff. The fact that most DHIA members are also Farm Bureau members emphasizes this alliance.

### Artificial Breeding Association

In the same way, the Artificial Breeding Association has been linked to the extension-Farm Bureau office. Founded in 1939 largely through the efforts of the assistant county agent, it was backed by the current Farm Bureau president and several Farm Bureau directors and former officers. The ABA began by buying one bull and leasing several others, renting barn space and hiring two veterinarians, on a fee basis, as inseminators. By 1945 there were 375 members of the Association, almost all of whom lived in the county. Nevertheless, expansion had meant not only adding members within the county but also shipping semen to other Connecticut dairymen, and to Massachusetts and Vermont, although an officer of the ABA commented: "We discouraged shipments outside of the county; we didn't want to grow too fast or spread out too far."

In October, 1945, a state-wide ABA was formed, and in December of that year the Litchfield ABA sold its string of bulls, and became simply an inseminating group, purchasing semen from the State ABA. Almost all of the members of the original association have retained their membership and new ones have been added. The association is in a healthy condition today.

Although the assistant county agent "did a good deal of the foot-work getting it started," according to the president of the association, several "leading farmers" made personal calls on their neighbors to get members. "When we had signed up enough farmers, we held a meeting and elected directors and officers." The directors elected at the annual (and only full) meeting of ABA members, are charged with policy and decision making. They generally meet once a month. In the period when the ABA owned its bulls, there was a bull selection committee for each breed which examined the bulls to be purchased and made recommendations (but not decisions) about purchasing. A good deal of the routine business of orders, reports and records is carried on by the aforementioned dairy specialist on the county extension staff, and, especially now that the bull barn is no longer maintained in Litchfield, the county agent's office serves as operating headquarters for the Association.

The officers of the ABA are drawn from the same upper and upper middle class groups of farmers who contribute leadership to the Farm Bureau and the DHIA. In all three of these organizations, and in others we shall mention later, the same names are repeated in one list of directors after another.

Members of the ABA, however, are likely to be farmers with small or medium sized herds who could not afford a purebred sire, but who desire to breed their cattle selectively. A director of ABA remarked: "We don't have (as members) the real big farms like — (an "estate" farm of purebred Brown Swiss). They breed only along certain narrow lines like Langwater and so on — and they breed for type. Well, we

aren't so fussy as that — all we're after is the index (of milk production) and any proven sire will do most of our members, though we'd rather use purebreds." Although there are no rules for excluding them, ABA officers "discourage" cattle dealers and farmers who chronically buy herd replacements because "all they're after is the young stock for sale. They don't care about improving the quality of their herds on the farm, and they don't really follow the purpose of the Association."

### **Breeders' Associations**

A third important kind of agricultural-technological associations is the various cattle breeders associations. Guernsey, Ayrshire, and Holstein Breeder's Associations are active in the county although only the Guernsey Association is organized on a county basis. Both of the others are state-wide associations which have at least one director who resides in the county. Fundamentally, however, they all have similar functions and activities.

The principal purpose of a breeder's association, in the words of an officer of one, is: "to publicize your breed, and its advantages, so that the demand for that breed will be increased and the value of your own herd and your young stock will be greater." A corollary purpose is to disseminate and exchange information about breeding and to instruct farmers who want to learn about breed lines.

Breeders' associations are likely to have small, rather select memberships, since the purposes of such an organization appeal only to relatively well-to-do farmers with purebred herds or ambitions to raise purebreds. The county Guernsey Breeders' Association has only 50 members, for example, almost all of whom are "big" farmers. Its activities consist of a "Guernsey Field Day" held on the farm of a member, at which registered cattle are exhibited and informal talks and discussion of the fine points of the cattle play a prominent part. The efforts are principally promotional — attempts to interest spectators in buying registered cattle and breeding their own registered stock. Occasionally officers of breeders' associations will give informal talks about their respective cattle at Farm Bureau meetings, especially barn meetings.

A second main branch of agricultural-technological associations are those which are primarily interested in promoting the economic welfare of farmers. While the Farm Bureau has such a function, in part, the principal organizations of this kind are cooperative buying and selling groups.

### **Producers' Cooperatives**

Aside from the milk which is retailed by its producers (so-called producer-dealers) the largest single marketing agency is the Connecticut Milk Producers' Association. This producers' co-op is principally a bargaining agency which contracts with processors and retail dealers for its producer members. Arrangements are not rigid. Some milk is picked up by CMPA trucks, hauled to CMPA plants and processed and retailed



by dealers with whom CMPA has contacts. In any case, farmer-members receive their checks directly from CMPA, not individual dealers, and most members regard this as a great advantage. The association relieves them of the details of business transactions and is prepared to protect them from dealers who may go bankrupt. In short, it takes a good many of the headaches out of marketing for the individual farmer. CMPA also takes a considerable part in efforts to increase the prices paid to producers in hearings with the milk administrator and, in fact, plays a leading role in most of these sessions. In addition, CMPA provides field men who will check the bacteria count and butter-fat test of members' herds and, if a member feels he is being given short weight at the plant, will check the weigh-tank. All these services help to make members feel secure and convince them that the Association is a powerful and useful ally.

Yet it is doubtful that most farmers in the county feel that they really own and direct CMPA. Perhaps because it is a state-wide organization, is so large, and has no local county organizations (although there are CMPA directors who are farmers in Litchfield County), most farmers do not feel the close intimate relationship with it that they do with, say, town government. A great many, in fact, regard it as simply another commercial outlet with whom they may do business if they choose. Few feel great personal loyalty to it.

The membership of CMPA is grossly selected. All of its members, are, of course, commercial farmers who produce considerable quantities of milk. Directors on the other hand, are likely to be selected (at least in Litchfield County) from the upper middle and upper classes of the farm population.

The only other cooperative milk producers' association in the county is the Cooperative Dairy in Torrington. It was founded in 1920 by 16 farmers from Goshen and Winchester, who were suddenly left without a market when the dealer to whom they had been selling abruptly stopped accepting their milk. In straitened circumstances they borrowed money for an old building and some second-hand pasteurizing equipment, and set out peddling milk at retail. Today most of the original 16 members and two sub-dealers retail about 3,000 quarts of milk a day over four routes in the city of Torrington. A new plant costing \$35,000 was erected in 1942 and the \$25,000 loan made for this purpose was paid off in about three years. In addition, it is the proud boast of the organization that its members have received from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 cents more per quart than the regulated price paid by commercial dealers and other outlets.

But, besides financial solvency, this association has held member interest and involves member participation to a greater extent than any other cooperative in the county. Undoubtedly the small size of the organization, the geographical proximity of members to each other, and the permanence of membership have contributed greatly to the interest and personal loyalty which the members feel. Although the Coopera-



tive Dairy hires a plant manager and several employees to take care of the routine operations, all policies and decisions are controlled by the farmer members. Each member has one vote and owns \$1,000 worth of stock. Although they are besieged with applications from non-members who wish to join, the present members have "kept it small because we all know each other and we feel it's our own business." The fact that control is vested equally in all members, and that both responsibilities and benefits are limited to a small group (i.e., "no one is working for anyone else") has a great deal to do with the success of the organization and the persistence of cooperative feeling among members. The members of the Cooperative Dairy are all middle-class medium-sized farmers, and this social class homogeneity probably adds strength to the organization.

### **Buyers' Cooperatives**

There are two buying cooperatives for farmers in the county, one located at Torrington and one at Thomaston, the latter being an outgrowth of the former. The Litchfield County Cooperative (at Torrington) was founded in 1917, its purpose to buy feed in carload lots. Today its principal business is in grain and own-mixed feeds, although some hay and straw, peat moss and shavings are sold, and fertilizers, small hardware, seeds and sprays are handled. The number of stockholders is not limited, although to hold stock an individual "must be engaged in agricultural pursuit." The Co-op has some 300-400 patrons, of whom about 125 are stockholders, who have one vote each. Organizational activity is limited to one stockholders' meeting a year at which directors are elected and dividends (both the stockholders' and patrons' dividends) are voted.

Although it draws patrons from a limited area (about 10-15 miles around Torrington) and is relatively small in size, this buying cooperative seems to fail to arouse the intense interest and feeling of personal participation among members which is characteristic of the Co-op Dairy. Although the directors are charged with making policy, a great share of the day-to-day responsibility for operation seems to rest upon the hired manager. It is doubtful that many patrons feel intensely loyal to the organization and a great many seem to regard it as "another place to buy feed".

### **Production Credit Association**

In closing this section, we must consider briefly the Production Credit Association, and its relationship to the farmers of the county. Organized in 1934 under the Farm Credit Administration, it began its life as a largely public agency. By 1946 its earnings had placed it primarily on its own, although some federal money is still invested in it and a measure of federal control is retained. It is doubtful, however, that many farmers, even those who borrow from it regard it as a

private, cooperative association. Rather they still consider it a government, or government-sponsored agency.

The PCA which operates in Litchfield has headquarters in Torrington but its area also includes part of two other counties. There are about 180 members in Litchfield County and in 1946 the number of loans outstanding was about 130, totalling \$235,000. Most PCA loans in the county are made to dairy farmers, on a 2 to 3 year basis and average \$1,800 - 2,000 per loan. Actually a dairyman's need for short-term credit for production purposes is low, and most of the loans made are for capital expenditures. The regular, steady income from milk checks makes repayment comparatively easy and farmers prefer short-term loans for most of their purchases of livestock and tools and for building repair and improvement. Most of the borrowers are medium to large-scale dairy farmers and the average size of herd is about 30 cows or more. The early days of PCA in the county were characterized by rapid growth. Farmers were desperate for credit and could not get it easily from banks. Over half the applicants between 1934 and 1937 were referred by private banks. At first rejection rates ran high, about 50 to 60 percent, and 95 percent of all loans were secured. Currently the majority of applicants are accepted and only about 35 percent of all loans are secured.

Loans can be made only to members of the Association, and borrowers must own stock in the amount of five percent of their loans. It is possible for any potential borrower who is an acceptable credit risk, to join by borrowing the necessary amount of stock. Many borrowers retain their stock after having repaid their loans and, in this way, the permanent membership of PCA has grown.

Although the organization is nominally a cooperative operated by its member-borrowers under federal government supervision, the actual operations are left largely in the hands of a hired manager. The ten-man loan committee almost always approves his loan recommendations, placing the responsibility for decisions largely upon him.

There is an annual meeting of members at which directors are elected. The names of directors submitted by the nominating committee are generally approved by the membership and there is a tendency for directors to be perpetuated in office. There seems to be little interest among the membership in taking an active part in operation. A qualified informant who has been in close touch with the PCA for several years made this statement: "I hate to say this but I don't think most of our members would turn out for meetings if we just announced a business meeting and said that all we were going to do was transact business. They come for the entertainment and for the two or three dollar dinner. They know we put on a good program."

It is doubtful that many PCA members thoroughly understand the workings of the organization or feel that it is their Association. They feel comparatively little personal loyalty to it. The same informant

commented: "Most of the members aren't sold on the cooperative idea too much. To them (PCA) is just another place to get money — like any other commercial institution. The reason most of them go to it is that it's cheaper."

This comment seems to apply to several of the cooperative agricultural associations which operate in the county. The most clear-cut exception to it is the Litchfield Cooperative Dairy, which is also distinguished by being a tightly closed, locally owned concern in which the membership is small and turnover almost nil. None of the other cooperatives described have all of these features, and it seems likely that this configuration of factors accounts for the unusually high degree of personal interest which Co-op Dairy members take in their organization, and the amount of time and effort they are willing to expend upon its operation, while the members of other cooperatives are content to place most of the responsibility on hired managers.

### **Civic-Sociability Associations**

Rural people in Litchfield County not only carry on education, worship and agricultural technology in formal associations, but also attend to the major part of their civic, welfare, fraternal and purely sociability activities in such groups. The number and variety of such organizations is very great, and there are a great many differences in the associational pattern from town to town. Bethlehem, for example, is a town of 715 people with one small village center, but it has the following organizations whose membership is drawn almost entirely from within its borders: Community Club, Civic Association, Parent-Teacher Association, Volunteer Fire Department (and Ladies Auxiliary), American Legion (and Auxiliary), Public Health Nursing Association, Red Cross, Boy and Girl Scouts, 4-H Club, Ladies Aid, Ladies Guild, and Grange. Sharon, a town of 1,610 people with a larger village center has three Granges, the Masons, Eastern Star, Boy and Girl Scouts, 4-H Club, School Nurse Association, Women's Club, Lions Club, four womens associations connected with churches and three young peoples societies connected with churches.

Nor are these extraordinary cases. The same situation can be found all over the county with the differences only in the names of the groups. The particular situation in each town is too intricate to be dealt with here, but there are certain generalized characteristics of these organizations which can be studied and various organization-types can be delineated.

### **Civic and Welfare Organizations**

This category includes such groups as Parent-Teacher Associations, Public Health and School Nursing Associations, Volunter Fire Depart-

ments, Lions and Rotary Clubs, and a series of miscellaneous local organizations which have civic improvement aims.

PTA's, PHNA's and most of the local civic associations are predominantly female in membership and leadership. A large part of the membership are younger, married women and, more often than in other organizations, leaders are the newcomers in town. Farm women are underrepresented in these organizations which are village dominated. Their activities are various, but generally concerned with providing health service, recreational facilities, and hot lunches for school children. They generally raise money through voluntary contributions, card parties, or by putting on suppers for other (usually men's) organizations or at special events. In addition nursing associations often receive a grant out of town funds. In most cases the membership is drawn from within the town.

Volunteer Fire Departments are exclusively male, although they often have women's auxiliaries which assist in fund-raising by putting on suppers and doing the catering at card parties or other money-raising affairs. The active members are most often young men, although the officers are likely to be older. Farm men are not as active as village men in this organization, although the nucleus of farmers is vital in handling daytime fires. In several towns, VFD's face a peculiar problem, in that their members (including, sometimes, the chief) are employed outside of the town and are absent during most of the day. The actual responsibility therefore devolves upon some man who, while he may not be the nominal chief, is an all-day resident of the town and available for all emergencies. He generally is a storekeeper and his place of business is known to be the place to telephone if there is a fire. In addition to its explicit function of fighting fire, the VFD often serves as a loafing group for the younger members who foregather in the fire-house evenings to play cards, pool, or talk.

Lions, Rotary and other national civic associations are not frequent outside of the thickly settled towns. They generally attract the middle and upper class business and professional men of the town, principally the older men. Farmers rarely belong. Activities of these clubs usually include sponsoring or contributing to charity or community recreation projects, and, sometimes, backing movements for improvements of town services.

In addition to their explicit functions, these groups all perform a generalized sociability function and, at their meetings, a good deal of the behavior which is ordinarily designated as "visiting," "chatting" or "gossiping" is evident. For it is within the framework of formal associations that much informal human contact takes place in this county.

## Youth Groups

The chief organizations for youth in the county are the 4-H Clubs, Boy and Girl Scouts, YMCA (through Hi-Y Clubs) and Future Farmers of America.



The last named organization consists of boys studying vocational agriculture at the three high schools which offer such courses. The principal activities of these clubs are intimately connected with school work and with summer-time farm projects — usually involving dairy cattle, poultry or a vegetable garden. FFA is a comparatively unimportant youth organization in numerical terms.

There are some 21 YMCA clubs located in 17 different towns in the county, exclusive of the city YMCA's. They are either elementary school (sixth to eighth grade) or high school age clubs, and include both boys and girls, sometimes in the same club. Meetings are generally held at schools or churches, and sometimes at town halls, in the village centers of the various towns. Affiliated with the national YMCA they follow a similar program — group games, practice in public speaking, discussion of current events, debates, and so-called "community service projects." The last-named included a diversity of activities with a money-raising purpose. For example, one club held a minstrel show and contributed the proceeds to rebuilding a church in the village, while another burned off a pasture for a widow and used their compensation to attend the circus in New York City; still another club held a pet show in connection with a town fair and gave the gate receipts to their school to be used in purchasing a motion-picture projector. YMCA clubs seem to draw from farm and non-farm youth indiscriminately and no social class distinctions appear.

There are various Boy and Girl Scout troops throughout the county which follow the program set up by the national organization, devoting most of their attention to woodcraft, nature study and outdoor play. In addition, there are some 14 "lone scouts" in the county — boys who live too far from an active troop to attend its meetings and who cannot find enough other boys of appropriate age to form a troop of their own. Lone scouts have a sponsor in most cases, an adult who supervises their achievement activities and thus permits them to advance through the grades of scout-hood. A good many of these lone scouts are farm boys.

The principal youth organization for farm children, however, is the 4-H Club, a county-wide organization which has a large number of small local units. The exact number of local 4-H clubs is variable since comparatively few last very long, and clubs are constantly being organized and becoming defunct. Both farm and non-farm belong to 4-H clubs and there are even some members in cities.

Local clubs are usually organized by a nucleus of four to a dozen children of the same sex (occasionally both boys and girls are in the same club) and of roughly equal ages who live fairly close together in the same town. Each club has an adult sponsor or leader of corresponding sex who performs an instructional function. Girls' clubs may concentrate on sewing or cooking, or do both, while boys' clubs usually focus their interest on caring for cattle or gardening.



Girls' clubs learn to prepare specific dishes and to serve meals in the "correct" way, make dresses or other garments and sometimes have demonstrations of how to dress or make-up appropriately for various occasions.

Boys' clubs take part in cow-judging contests, discuss proper procedures in feeding cattle, raising young stock, improving pasture or hayland, caring for poultry, or planning gardens. They often take "forestry tours" or "dairy tours" in which they visit and inspect appropriate features of farms in the county, accompanied by their leader, the farm operator or an extension staff member.

Both boys and girls engage in home projects which are appropriate to the interests of their clubs and these occupy their time between meetings.

There are about a dozen baby-beef projects in the county, most of them carried on by boys. Although this type of activity is incompatible with the nature of commercial agriculture in the county, it attracts many boys largely because it is relatively unusual, and has a definite time span with a specific goal. It begins in December and ends in September when the steer is sold for meat at a fair and the proceeds of sale are given to the boy. A dairy project, on the other hand is almost endless and does not have such a specific goal. After a few months the operations in such a project tend to become routinized and the boy loses interest.

Besides the specific agricultural and homemaking content of their instruction, 4-H clubs attempt to make their members familiar with parliamentary procedure in conducting meetings, and with the writing up of reports and keeping of records both those of the club and the records of project activity. Project records also stress the economic features of 4-H work; the boy or girl is almost invariably asked to estimate the cost of carrying on his project and the value of the product derived.

In these respects, 4-H like the YMCA, prepares children for participation in the society they are likely to live in as adults, a society which is permeated by formally organized associations and their procedural paraphernalia. It teaches them not only familiarity with rules of formal group behavior but also stresses the importance of methodical, orderly procedure and an awareness of the economic aspects of vocational activity. A project is seen to be a good thing not only because it teaches technique in performing some appropriate task but also because it makes money for the boy or girl who carries it on.

Like the Boy or Girl Scouts, 4-H Clubs face two main problems: adult leadership and the life cycle of clubs.

The leadership problem is chiefly one of finding an adult who lives near most of the club members, who is skilled in the performance of the appropriate tasks and able to instruct children in them, and

whose interest in working with club members is at least as enduring as the club itself. These qualities are in that order, increasingly difficult to find. Frequently the appropriate parent of one of the members takes on the leadership job. Sometimes it is a local teacher, especially in a girl's club. Most leaders are farmers and farm wives who are native-born (although long-time residence in the town is not necessary), who own their farms, and are Farm Bureau members. Most have children who are or have been in 4-H work, and some are ex-4-H members themselves. There is nearly as large a turnover in adult leaders as there is in clubs.

The life cycle problem arises out of age-grading and the relatively sparse settlement of rural areas. Boys and girls become eligible for 4-H Club activity and begin to form clubs between the ages of 10 and 12 years. Since interest differences even between single years may be great at this age level, the age range of members must be narrow, and this limits the size of clubs in open-country rural areas. Often there are no children in the immediate neighborhood who are only a year or two younger, and, even when there are, few clubs make provision for recruiting them when they become eligible. Rather, a club tends to retain its original members, or to grow smaller, and the members grow older together. To admit younger children whose interests and capabilities differ greatly might mean risking disruption and disharmony. Most clubs simply continue with their original membership and gradually die out when their members outgrow 4-H activity. The club in that particular locality simply disappears until another supply of 10-11 year olds become available. The life span of most clubs is about two and one-half years, with children being recruited at 10-11 and dropping out between 13 and 14. After the 14-15 year range, the mortality of interest is high, although a very few remain in 4-H work until they are out of high school.

All youth organizations face the age-grading problem in one form or another, and their activities are hampered by it. At best, it means that youth must be divided into a great many different groups, by ages, and this is a serious limitation in the relatively small populations of rural areas. When further limitations on membership are introduced (as, for example, religious affiliation in church groups) organizational size dwindles almost to the vanishing point. Yet attempts are still made to fit social activities for young people into the formal mold, even if it means that every member of an association must hold some office and there are scarcely enough people to carry out the ritual of parliamentary procedure. For formally organized associations are characteristic of the environment and the training of young people in their ways is accepted as entirely natural.

### **Fraternal Organizations**

Although there are many different varieties of fraternal orders in the county, most towns have three principal kinds: the secret orders

such as Masons, Elks, Eastern Star, Rebecca and so forth; the American Legion and other veterans organizations; and the Grange, which, because of its agricultural orientation is more conveniently studied separately.

In most rural towns the secret orders are not prominent. There are not many chapters of them and their membership is not large. It is likely to be drawn from the middle class. Farm people, although they may belong, are not generally very active in them.

The American Legion is the principal veterans' organization in the county and has begun growing in size. Because of the unusual nature of its eligibility requirements, the Legion cannot be as easily characterized as to membership as most organizations. It is doubtless the least selective as to social class, and the most selective in regard to age of all adult organizations. It is not nearly so likely to be dominated by long-time residents as many other organizations and neither ethnic origin nor occupation are as important in determining the leadership. Between the wars, the Legion posts in most rural towns grew up and then began to decline as members aged and began to drop out of activities. Recently, old posts have been revived and some new ones have sprung up. With the return of new veterans, the interest of Legion posts in athletic teams, dances and recreational facilities in their halls have increased. In some towns the Legion hall is the meeting place of the young, unmarried male loitering and loafing groups. It seems likely, however, that these aspects of Legion activity will sooner or later grow less important as they did once before, and that the size of active membership may decrease. Like youth groups, the Legion will experience problems of aging and replacement of members, but even more acutely.

Although the Patrons of Husbandry was originally a purely farmers' organization, most of the Granges in Litchfield County today have lost their agricultural flavor, and are dominated by non-farm people. "The Grange is drifting right away from the farmers" remarked one town official who operates a commercial dairy. "I don't know half a dozen farmers in this town who go regularly to Grange. And when there's something coming up in the legislature that affects farmers it's the State Grange or the National Grange that does something about it — the local Granges don't. It has gotten to be just a social organization." In four Granges which were studied in detail, the percentage of farm members ran between 25 and 35. Only three of the officers of the largest Pomona (there are three in the county) are farmers.

The Grange appears to draw its membership principally from the middle and lower classes of both farm and non-farm society, although some upper class farmers belong to it. It is one of the least restricted organizations both as to membership and leadership, and as one observer put it: "Anyone has a good chance of becoming an officer in the Grange — there aren't the social class distinctions that there are in other organizations." One overburdened Lecturer complained: "No one around

here *wants* to hold office in the Grange. They all want to dodge the responsibility as much as possible."

The older age groups often dominate particular Granges, although sporadic efforts are made to "get in some new blood" and members are encouraged to bring their sons and daughters to meetings as soon as they are old enough to participate. For some young people, the Grange provides an opportunity for courtship although it is not the principal meeting ground for prospective partners.

It has already been stated that local Granges take almost no part in state politics as far as agriculture is concerned, and this can be generalized to almost all political activity. The community welfare activities of Granges are limited. During the war most of them assisted in paper and scrap salvage drives, and, more recently, in clothing relief drives. A few Granges give out Christmas baskets to the local poor and collect magazines for institutional patients. But most of their time and attention is taken up by the formal program which is handed down to them through the national and Pomona Granges.

This program is a fairly rigid matter and allows comparatively little local flexibility. The topics to be emphasized at each meeting are prescribed in a general way and the lecturer of the local Grange uses her (less often his) ingenuity in finding speakers to handle the various assignments. The nature of various programs can be glimpsed in a few sample titles: "Headlines in Science," "The Men of Our Country," "Cupid's Bow," (given on the night of February 14th), "Spring Begins," "Memorial Night: Looking Backward," "Sharps and Flats," "Did You Know That .....?" and so on. The place of farming in these programs is revealed in the answer of one lecturer of a Grange in a good farm area: "Yes, we have to have ten minutes on agriculture — that's a regulation."

A good share of the Grange Program is occupied by the ritual and several thoughtful observers pointed out the significance of this. One rural minister commented: "I've often thought that the principal attraction of the Grange was just going through the ritual. It seems to hold these people, they get all wrapped up in it. I think it adds color to the humdrum life of farmers and gives some dignity to their work ..... The Grange is very close to them — the words, the expressions and the symbols are very familiar things to all of them and are a part of their daily lives." Another minister in another part of the county spoke of a "need for ritual and ceremony which people don't get elsewhere. They would be outraged by the thought of it in the (Congregational) church but find it satisfying in the Grange."

There is little doubt that in its bi-monthly meetings and frequent dances, the local Grange serves a real sociability function. And while the emphasis on agriculture has greatly declined, the Grange is still closely allied to the farm heritage which is never very far away from rural Litchfield people.



### Miscellaneous Sociability Clubs

This category includes a vast range of organizations, chiefly dominated by women, whose principal functions are to occupy leisure time, provide opportunities for exchanging information, ideas and opinions, and to accomplish a diversity of specific ends. In Bethlehem, for example, the Community Club's principal activity is giving showers for prospective brides of the town; in Sharon, the Women's Club provides the poor of the town with gifts of food and clothing, and is one of the chief agencies for handling the local end of various national relief drives; in Goshen, the Garden Club encourages the raising of flowers and listens to speakers on various horticultural topics.

Associations such as these generally attract older married women and, predominantly, those who have lived in the town for a long time. Farm women do not participate in them to the extent that non-farm women do. Foreign-born women are much less likely to belong as are members of the lower-class of both farm and non-farm society. In most towns one or more clubs of this sort acquire prestige and an invitation to join has a mark of social acceptance.

### The Role of Civic-Sociability Associations

All of this organizational activity has certain general consequences which affect individuals and families to a considerable extent.

In the first place, the large number of organizations and the relatively small populations of most towns result in an inevitable overlapping of membership and, particularly, of leadership. Not everyone is active in formal associations and a fairly large part of the population attend the meetings of even one organization only irregularly. On the other hand, there seems to be a fairly large proportion who are chronic joiners, constant attenders of meetings and always eager to "take an interest" as the local phrase puts it. The bulk of the rural population probably falls between these extreme categories and attends the meetings of one or two organizations regularly and the rest occasionally or not at all. That there is real overlapping of membership is evident in the experience which several women's associations had in Goshen during the war. In an effort to save gasoline, several organizations met on the same day. The Garden Club met in the morning, the Ladies' Aid held a luncheon meeting and another women's club, an afternoon meeting — all with scarcely any changes in personnel.

And leadership is quite likely to overlap from one organization to another. A leader, such as president or chairman, in one association is more likely than not to be a secondary officer such as secretary or committee head in one or more additional organizations. Leaders are most often those who "take an interest" who are "organization-minded," and they seem to be selected from the relatively small segment of hyper-active people who devote a large part of their waking hours to formal associations.



There is some evidence that, for such people, organizational activity (and, especially, leadership) represents the fulfillment of personal ambitions, and the gratification of ego demands for recognition and prestige. A good example is given in the words of the founder and present president of one organization: "I belong to so many organizations I don't have time for them all. But I was the one, I guess, who did most of the work getting this one started. And I still do. I get the speakers, do the kitchen work for the refreshments, handle the collections, and do odd jobs." Commenting on a special event which the club was going to hold, the same officer said: "I had a hard time putting that one over, but we're going to have it. I think it's a good idea ..... It promotes good will and does everybody good. We used to do it in the ..... Club and we'll do it here the same way." This is an unusually frank and revealing statement of personal gain derived from organizational activity, but it is probably not an extraordinary motivation. To perhaps a less conscious degree, the same satisfactions may attract leaders to many organizations.

Another problem which overorganized rural society faces is the demand which the large number of separate groups make upon facilities and time.

The commander of an American Legion Post in one small town commented: "The only place to meet around here is the town hall, and when I went to see about scheduling a meeting, I found it was reserved for every night for a whole month ahead." A county extension worker commented: "It's entirely possible, in the smallest and most rural towns, for a woman to have some meeting to attend every night," while a Grange lecturer complained: "All of my family are always busy. My two boys are in school and it seems as if they hardly ever have a night to themselves. It's Scouts, or plays, or music, or teams, or games, or clubs or something all the time. My husband hardly ever has a night to himself. It's something every night and sometimes two or three things in *one* night ..... It has got to where we have to *plan ahead* to spend an evening at home together."

Scheduling is important to many organizations in that they must be careful to avoid conflict with regular, traditional meetings of other associations. This is especially true of special events at which money is to be raised and the size of attendance is important. The wife of a minister remarked: "Several organizations have regular nights for meetings. The Grange always meets the first and third Mondays, the Masons another night and so on. And other groups tactfully avoid scheduling their meetings for those nights, mostly because there is duplication in membership and people can only go to one thing at a time. The result is, there are only a few nights in any week that are open and it's a rush to the town bulletin board. The organization that posts its notice first has priority on that night." Another informant in the same town remarked: "The result of all this splitting up is that every time an organization meets, one night is used up, \$15 is spent for hiring

the hall and only a handful of people are served. And there are only so many nights in any one month."

One reason for the apparent overorganization in the county is pressure from higher levels upon organizations which have state or national affiliations. Frequently such national organizations are attempting to expand their program as a whole and feel compelled to stimulate the growth of local units even where there is no functional need for them. It is reported, for example, that one member of the county advisory board of the Girl Scouts had considerable pressure brought to bear upon her by the state and the national organization to organize a Girl Scout unit in her own town. This woman felt strongly that the 4-H clubs, school clubs and church associations which were already functioning in the town absorbed all the time of the available young girls and met their organizational needs adequately. So far, she has resisted this pressure but is finding it increasingly embarrassing to explain her position to the organizers at higher levels in the hierarchy. Again, some organizations set up standards or norms of activity and organization for local units which must be met in order to gain recognition or prestige. Good examples of this may be found in the Grange where there are certain requirements regarding program content, committee organization and number of meetings that must be met in order for the local unit to be accorded a standing of "model Grange" or "honor Grange." One Grange official, explaining the programs of his group, said: "They (National Grange) set up something like say Fire Prevention or Home Safety as one of the goals for the year. And to get to be an honor Grange you've got to hold at least one Fire Prevention program during the year." The State Federation of Women's Clubs also has norms which must be met in order to attain and maintain affiliation and the State Parent-Teachers Association makes certain strong "recommendations" which have much the same effect on local organizations.

While a few associations are composed of an elite, and membership in them awards prestige to the individual, in many more cases, the reverse is true. Several qualified observers report that very often pressure is brought to bear on non-joiners by organizations seeking members, and that many people join in order to avoid being accused of being snobbish or stand-offish. This statement can be supported for almost all organizations except for a very few women's associations in particular towns.

Most civic-sociability organizations, whatever their enunciated purpose, feature eating, entertainment and social intercourse. They provide principally a central place to meet one's acquaintances, partake of food, and exchange talk. They offer a manifest reason for gathering together, and thus the latent reason — an opportunity for sociability, for visiting, and gossip — is cloaked in a socially acceptable form. In this culture, where hard work is praised, and sloth and idleness condemned, the human need for sociability is not often allowed to appear undisguised.



## CHAPTER X

### AGRICULTURAL PUBLIC AGENCY RELATIONSHIPS

There are only three agricultural public agencies which operate in Litchfield County — the Extension Service, the Production and Marketing Administration (through the Agricultural Conservation Association) and the Farmers Home Administration. The activity of the last-named is limited, but the first two are of considerable importance.

#### The Agricultural Extension Service

In describing the relationship between the Farm Bureau and the Extension Service, we have already detailed the program and activities of the latter and it is unnecessary to repeat them here. But it is worthwhile to consider briefly the role which the Extension Service and the county staff play in rural Litchfield society.

Probably because they bear a part of the cost of cooperative extension work, Farm Bureau members (and, hence, most of the commercial farmers in the county) have come to regard it more as their own program than as something superimposed upon them from higher up in the organizational hierarchy. There is practically no feeling that the government is trying to run farmers' affairs as far as the Extension Service is concerned. Rather, the county staff are looked upon as friendly sources of help and information who are working "for" the farmer and not "for" the government. On the other hand, farmers rarely accept the advice or recommendations of the extension staff unquestioningly. They are inclined to view them with some reservations and to weigh them carefully (especially the kind of generalized suggestions which are given out at meetings, over the radio, and in publications) and to evaluate them in relation to their own situation.

Many farmers regard the extension staff as their agents and representatives in dealing with higher levels of state and federal organization, and tend to lay their troubles, problems and frustrations in such matters at the door of the agent. The staff is expected not only to help farmers in their fight for a higher price for milk, but also to make efforts for them in obtaining farm machinery, construction permits, and farm labor. The extension staff is the principal channel through which farmers and government agencies deal with each other.

The county extension staff, as employees of both a private and a public agency, attempt to serve the interests of both. Since these interests are more often parallel than not, the chief result has been to bring the staff closer to farmers and to make them feel more responsible to them and more interested in their welfare. For this reason the position and function of the extension staff are not unlike those of the ward boss or practical politician who must act as a buffer between the

electorate with whom he is in close, daily contact, whose needs, opinions, and preferences are familiar to him, and the distant, impersonal authority of higher levels of government organization. In a similar manner (although, of course, out of more laudable motives) the extension staff act as buffers between the farmers and government agencies, attempting to adapt the desires and intentions of each to the other.

The fact that the county staff work principally with the commercial farmers (almost all of whom belong to the middle and upper class in farm society) of the county, and put relatively little time on problems of part-time farmers and rural seasonal residents is a logical consequence of the cooperative relationship between Farm Bureau and the Extension Service. As we have already pointed out, the majority of Farm Bureau members are commercial farmers and their influence is only partly financial. Through directors and officers of the Farm Bureau they play a large part in determining the policies and the orientation of the cooperative extension work. The strong allegiance which the staff feel toward full-time commercial farmers whose living is made out of agriculture, and their conviction that their primary responsibility is to them, is an outgrowth of their constant, day-to-day association with this group and its problems.

### **The Agricultural Conservation Association**

The Agricultural Conservation Association in the county is active chiefly in distributing lime and superphosphate to cooperating farmers, and thereby encouraging pasture improvement and better hay and corn land maintenance. In this role, it has fitted well into the technology of agriculture in the county, since liming and spreading commercial fertilizers have long been accepted practices in this region.

In another way, however, the Agricultural Conservation Association ran opposite to county tradition. Litchfield farmers have always felt that the way in which a man ran his farm was his own business, not that of the government. For that reason they resented the sign-up, and declaration of intentions to plant. They were suspicious of "something for nothing," the apparent gift of lime and fertilizer. Most of them wondered why a government agency in its right mind would suddenly offer to bear the burden of what had always been considered a normal farm expense. Some suspected a trick, believing either that the lime and fertilizer were of inferior grades or that at some time in the indefinite future, the government would present a bill for its bounty. But, as time went on, more and more farmers signed up. In 1947, there were about 1,000 cooperators and almost all of them follow recommended practices fairly closely.

The Agricultural Conservation Association now has a considerable measure of local autonomy. The county has been divided into 14 communities each of which elects a committee consisting of 3 members and 2 alternates. Delegates from these committees elect the county com-



mittee which, in turn, participates in the election of the State committee. The community committees have responsibility in shaping local programs. In 1946, for example, they decided to stress pasture clearing, the seeding and maintenance of perennial legumes, and other practices that emphasized the value of improved pasture. They also explain the current program to other farmers in their neighborhood and accept applications for membership and participation. The Agricultural Conservation Association became more firmly established in Litchfield County when the principle of local control over local problems was recognized.

### **The Farmers Home Administration**

The role of the Farmers Home Administration, formerly the Farm Security Administration, is slight in Litchfield County. In the spring of 1946 there were only five active service borrowers, and this is not an abnormally low number. The Farmers Home Administration receives comparatively few applications for loans, and is able to grant even fewer. Mainly because of its limited activities, the agency is not widely known around the county and comparatively few farmers would think of turning to it for assistance.

These are several interrelated conditions which explain the relative inactivity of the FHA in the county. In the first place, the amount of a tenant purchase loan is limited by law to \$12,000 and most farms in the county currently have a greater value than that. An adequate farm, stock and tools to support a family in commercial farming usually is valued at between ten and twenty thousand dollars. This price range is not merely the result of postwar inflation, but part of a long-time trend, for, as we have seen, many seasonal residents are moving into the county and buying up farms for residential use, at figures often above their value for agricultural purposes. This tends to limit the total number of farms available for tenant purchase and especially the number available at a fair price. Secondly, the percentage of tenancy is low (8.4 percent). This limits both the number of potential borrowers and the amount of loan money available for use in the county, since funds are allocated on the basis of percentage of tenancy. Thus, in Litchfield County, the allotment seldom exceeds \$15,000 a year, or enough for one tenant purchase loan, with the remaining \$3,000 devoted to rural rehabilitation loans. In the third place, rural rehabilitation loans are few since, according to one farm credit expert: "In this county you're either well off and you can get the money you need from banks, or PCA and so on; or else you're hopeless and nobody at all would lend you money, including FSA." It is true that there are comparatively few marginal farmers, especially under current cost conditions. The alternative opportunities are too great, and the financial penalties too stiff, to permit unsuccessful farmers to remain on the land and slowly slide into debt over a long period of time. For the time being, at least, there may be an increase in FHA activities resulting from a number of loan applications from veterans who wish to enter agriculture, for in

these cases the restriction on total funds available for the county has been waived. But this increase is likely to be only temporary, for the long-time situational factors mentioned above will continue to restrict both the need for FHA loans and their availability.

A high degree of cooperation exists between the agricultural agencies of the county. The Agricultural Extension Service, the Farm Bureau, and the Agricultural Conservation Association are all housed in one set of offices. This results in less confusion for the average farmer who doesn't always distinguish sharply between the functions of the various farm agencies, and it enables him to transact his agency affairs in one place. It also serves to prevent duplication of effort on the part of the officials and makes for greater efficiency in their work. This was especially helpful during the war when agricultural agencies were charged with special duties in connection with Selective Service and the rationing of farm machinery, gasoline and building supplies.

## CHAPTER XI

## OTHER SOCIAL GROUPS

## Neighborhoods and Villages

Locality groupings other than towns are socially unimportant in the county. In the first place the absence of physiographic features which might promote isolation and consequent social self-sufficiency, the availability and ease of transportation, and the proximity of large centers have facilitated mobility and eliminated social and economic dependence on the neighborhood. Secondly, the infiltration of seasonal dwellers and suburbanites into open country areas has greatly weakened the solidarity of farm neighborhoods and so lowered any territorial communality of interest that, in most of the county, the neighborhood has no functional significance. Although many of the neighborhood names have been preserved and are used for identifying the various sections of the town, the neighborhood is not a functional unit and it is scarcely a structural one.

Occupational diversity contributes greatly to the heterogeneity of rural neighborhoods in Litchfield County. The spatial distribution of residents according to their occupations and place of work is shown for one village and adjacent areas in Figure 5. Farm families, factory workers, retired professional people, suburbanites, summer residents and part-time farmers live side by side in village centers and along the roads that radiate from the centers. Although farm residences in this village are largely dispersed in the more open areas, they are interspersed with nonfarm dwellings, many of which are occupied by urban workers who have little in common with the farm population. Thus, the rural neighborhood does not constitute a homogeneous unit.

But, although the open-country neighborhood has almost disappeared, there is a neighborhood quality about most of the villages and hamlets which dot the county and which include the bulk of nonfarm permanent society. These villages are not closely integrated, self-conscious communities to which their inhabitants feel deep loyalty. Rather they are convenient clusters of homes and service establishments for which residents have a mild, sentimental attachment. They "like to live here, it's a pleasant little place" or "it's quiet but there's something doing evenings most of the time." Occasionally, as when the site of a new school is being debated, or when a vote is being taken to institute or abolish zoning laws, for example, they feel identification with the village. But, for the most part, the community aspect is minimized. For non-farm people as well as farm people, the town is the important social-territorial unit, and the village is where the town hall, the small factory, the grocery store, electric light company office, movie theatre, and bus stop are found.

We have indicated that most formal associations are village centered, and it is true that a large part of the membership of sociability, fraternal, civic and church associations are village people. To a certain extent these people think of particular associations as belonging primarily to villagers. But they do not think of the village as co-extensive with the association. That is, while the association is the village, the village is not the association. There is no feeling that the geographical unit is also a social unit — rather it is that the social units (the associations) are drawn principally from the same geographical unit.

### **Trade and Service Centers**

Not all of the 85 or more villages and hamlets in the county are trade centers. Only 71 of them offer any services at all, and 26 offer three or fewer kinds of services. On the other hand there are 19 villages which offer ten or more kinds of services, and can be termed semi-complete trade centers.

The 52 small trade centers are distributed fairly evenly around the county and it is safe to say that few Litchfield County residents have to drive more than 5 or 6 miles to get groceries and gasoline — the two most common kinds of services in the hamlets.

The 19 semi-complete service centers (12 of which have banking facilities) are fairly evenly distributed around the county except for the thinly-settled northeast corner. Thus, a semi-complete service center can usually be found within 10 or 12 miles of almost any residence in the county.

Complete urban service centers are also near at hand. Torrington and Winsted draw from the northern half of the county, and the nearby cities of Danbury, Waterbury, Poughkeepsie, N. Y., and Pittsfield, Mass., serve the margins of the county. For people who want a larger variety of goods or more exotic articles, Hartford, a city of 165,000 (in 1940) is but 28 miles east of Torrington. Given a car, the range of choice which rural Litchfield shoppers have is great indeed, compared to most other parts of the country.

### **The Extended Family**

In contrast to many other regions of the nation, the extended family, or kinship group, is not an important element in the social structure. Except for the aristocratic upper class in certain villages, among whom family descent is an important criterion of class status, one's relatives are almost inconsequential in directing one's behavior, ambitions, residence, occupation, or way of life. The chief activities in which family relationships are important are visiting, playing cards, and taking trips to town. Family obligations are primary in crises such as illnesses, deaths, births and weddings. Family relationships are more important and clear-cut among the foreign-born than among old Yankee stock.



Figure 5.

Map of a village in Litchfield County showing the spatial distribution of dwellings according to the occupation and place of work of the householder in 1948.



This situation is not surprising in view of the heterogeneity of the population in the county. To repeat, rural society here is diverse and fractionated into many different ways of life. The inhabitants are dissimilar not only in origin but in ambitions and goals, and they form voluntary, formal, contractual associations. In such a society, the so-called natural or organic group such as the extended family tends to disappear.

### Informal Groupings

Characteristically, too, informal groupings such as loafing or loitering groups, or casual assemblages of people for any purpose from recreation to political maneuvering are exceptional. In some villages there may be one or more groups of young, unmarried men who "hang out" at a gas station or general store, talking and joking before they make up their minds to drive to the nearest movie, play a little set-back, or simply disperse to their homes when the establishment closes. But even such assertions of male adulthood are likely to yield to the pressures of society and the loitering group becomes disguised as some sort of a formal association.

These loafing groups are composed of young, unmarried males, most of them between 18 and 25. These are almost the only years during which men, at least, have leisure time for loitering. Before this age, they are enmeshed in the academic and extra-curricular routines of school life, and, when they marry they become involved in a full and complicated schedule of formal associations. On either side of this narrow age range the formal groupings of society are waiting to fill their members' leisure with a constant round of meetings, committees, suppers, dances and programs.

The kind of informal groupings of spatially adjacent inhabitants which is sometimes called "neighboring" is not common in this society either. Mere physical proximity is not considered a good reason for friendship and a good neighbor hereabouts is not a frequent visitor, a lender or borrower of tools, food, household goods and so forth. Rather a good neighbor is a person nearby who will offer help in times of trouble and, at others, keep to himself and "mind his own business."

As we have seen, most sociability functions are performed in the framework of formal associations. Home is generally considered a retreat from social activity. There is some visiting but it is an activity which is confined to very narrow limits defined by social class, nationality or ethnic origin, religious affiliation, length of residence in the town and perhaps most important, family relationship. The Adamses and the Ozwarskis may live a quarter of a mile apart, may encounter each other frequently at Farm Bureau meetings, Grange dances, town elections and on the streets of the village. They may speak to each other, exchange opinions, dance together and vote the same way, but it is unlikely that you will find them having dinner together or playing

cards in one another's homes. The Adams family will exchange visits with the Hunts, however, even though they may live two or three miles away on another road; and relatives of the Adams will drop in from time to time if they live nearby, or will visit on Thanksgiving and Christmas. The Adams children who have married and have moved away will return for brief visits once or twice a year.

For quite another reason the practice of mutual aid or exchange of work among farmers is not common. Farmers assert that cooperative work used to be more important, "Oh, maybe fifty years ago," but today "it's every man for himself." Few express regret over the passing of this practice and usually add: "It's all right in theory, but you find out that the other fellow's work gets done but your own don't. His hay gets in when it's just right but your own gets dried out or soaked or, anyway, not in tip-top shape. And when you lend tools they come back worn out or in such bad shape you have to fix 'em before you can use 'em again."

It is quite likely that technological developments which have stressed getting in a crop when it is "just right" have narrowed the range of working-time for most farmers and made them feel that they were losing quality or quantity by stretching out the already short haying or harvest season. But there are other factors in the situation.

The weakening of the homogeneous farm neighborhoods through the immigration of non-farm people has not only spatially separated farms but has helped to weaken the bonds of loyalty, trust and mutual responsibility among farmers. They have lost the feeling of moral obligation to each other. Another factor contributing to this change of sentiment is the commercialization of agriculture. With the introduction of the profit motive and, especially, of the relatively narrow margin on which Litchfield farmers work it has become most important for each man to maximize the returns from his own farm. A tardily gathered hay or corn crop does not mean merely that the family will have less milk to drink and will have to depend more on other farm produce. But it means that the milk check, and, thereby the whole level of living, will be lower, and actual farm operations may be impeded by the lack of cash.

There are two kinds of informal activities which do play a limited role in rural society in the county — farm auctions and town fairs.

### Auctions

Farm auctions, most of which are held between April and October (comparatively few are held in June, July and August if they can be avoided) are the customary means of disposing of farm and, occasionally, household goods by farm families who have retired, gone broke or stopped farming for other reasons — often the death of the operator and the inability of his widow to obtain adequate help for carrying on operations. Auctions are locally evaluated as "big" or "junk" depending

not only on the quantity of cattle, tools and furnishings to be sold, but also on their quality. A "big" sale usually means that purebred cows, relatively up-to-date and well-cared for machinery are being sold. A "junk sale" is usually the dispersal of a small herd of grade cattle, worn out simple tools and rather battered household goods. Houses, barns and farm land are rarely sold at auction, but disposed of through a real estate dealer. Not all sales are "big" or "junk" and many fall between these two extremes.

A "big sale" is an event that attracts commercial farmers from all over the county as well as from other parts of the state and adjoining states. A dispersal sale of purebred cattle often brings prospective buyers from as far away as Vermont or New Jersey. Often the auctioneer is a specialist in the particular breed of cattle and is brought in from another state. A large part of the crowd at such sales consists of upper class farmers of the county, and those seasonal residents who own "estate farms." Most of the sales are made to these groups. Inevitable at all sales, cattle dealers appear and do some of the purchasing. The rest of the farmer-attendants come principally to view the cattle, hear the prices offered, find out who is expanding his herd, and to trade comments, jokes and gossip with the other commercial farmers whom they are sure to meet there. Most "big sales" start late in the morning, at 10 or 10:30 so that farmers will have had time to finish their morning milking and chores, and many farmers start drifting away from the auction by 3:30 or 4:00. Refreshments are usually served, most often by a women's group (such as the Ladies' Aid) who are raising funds for a cause.

At a small auction or a "junk sale" a different sort of crowd will appear. Middle class and lower class farm people turn out in force, mostly from the immediate neighborhood. There will be fewer cattle dealers; and fewer spectators who have no intention of buying. But, even here, the sociability and gossip functions are important. The auction lasts a shorter time, and refreshments either are not served or are not as elaborate.

Unless there are household goods for sale, women generally do not accompany men to farm auctions. If they take part in serving of lunch, or if they believe they will meet other farm women who are serving, they may go.

### Town Fairs

There is no Litchfield County Fair, as such, although the annual 4-H Fair is county-wide. All the other annual exhibitions are organized on a town basis, although they draw both exhibitors and spectators from all over the county and some from other parts of the state. Altogether there are four town fairs held annually in the county, in Goshen, Harwinton, Bethlehem and Riverton (in Barkhamsted), and the 4-H Fair

which moves its site from year to year. The town fairs all have overall similarities although they differ in matters of internal structure.

The town fairs are not old, as things go in Litchfield County. Goshen, the oldest, has been holding fairs for about forty years, and the others began 20 or 30 years ago. Town fairs originated as cattle shows, their primary purpose being to encourage improvements in cattle breeding, by awarding prizes and bestowing recognition on the owners. They also served as trading places for cattle and this function still persists although it has lost most of its importance. In addition, home canning and preserving exhibits, and displays of needlework are also featured. Work horses and poultry are shown too but run a poor second to cattle. The principal interest centers around the dairy cow pens and judging ring (except at the Harwinton Fair, at which no cattle are shown) and the stone-drawing contest for oxen. The latter is principally a survival trait, since oxen are no longer used for work on any commercial farms.

In recent years several fairs have added a horse-show, held either in conjunction with the regular exhibits or on a separate day. This seems to be a concession to the suburban and seasonal residents who form the bulk of the riding population. Comparatively few farms keep riding-horses.

Another interesting concession to the ways of "city people" has been that three fairs have altered their customary dates so as to include a Sunday. The work habits of dairy farmers are much the same on Sunday as on any other day, but, as the president of one fair commented: "You know, most people can't take time off from their jobs during the day the way farmers can, so having it on Sunday gives them a chance to come. We don't depend on just the farm people at the fair anymore — we couldn't make expenses if we had to." The same man added: "I'm sort of surprised the town lets it be held on Sunday. Me, I feel there's something special about Sunday, though I'm not a deeply religious man. I rarely, very rarely go to church. But they had such a success the first time the fair was held on Sunday that they want to keep it up and I guess it's all right."

Town fairs are held during September and early October, most of them for two days and all on weekends. They attract exhibitors principally from the town in which they are held, although oxen, for example, come from several parts outside of the county. A daily attendance of 5,000 to 10,000 is common, and farm people make up only a small part of the crowd.

Although these local fairs still have some trading functions, and are still ostensibly agricultural in nature, the farming element is of a different character than it used to be. Undoubtedly the midway, the small games of chance, attract some, but probably a great deal of the interest in them arises out of a vague desire on the part of suburbanites, seasonal residents and nearby city people to identify themselves momentarily with agriculture and life on the land. Although almost all

of the farm people in a town and a large number from surrounding towns turn out for a fair, they are swamped by a horde of nonfarmers. The town fairs, like the rural neighborhoods, have lost their even-textured agricultural homogeneity. They, too, have been suburbanized.

Although informal and kinship groups are important in Litchfield County, their role is by no means as conspicuous here as it is in some other parts of the United States. Informal groups may exercise an influence on social activity, but they usually operate within the framework of formal organizations. In almost all phases of life, from making a living to conversing with friends, formally organized associations dominate the scene and are the principal modes of group action.



## CHAPTER XII

### CONCLUSION

We have called attention to a wide variety of characteristics which are identified with social organization in Litchfield County. This concluding chapter draws the threads of the analysis together and emphasizes the interrelationships. Certain salient features demand especial attention, namely: town meeting government, part-time farming, the assimilation of the foreign-born population, the place of nonfarm elements in the rural population, the central value structure of rural people, and, finally, the role which commercial dairying plays in the life of the county.

#### Town Meeting Government

Foremost among such features is that of town-meeting government which still today retains many of its original qualities. The idea of local control of local affairs through orderly, democratic procedures, is as old as settlement in New England, and it is not surprising to find that, almost as soon as the first settlers of Litchfield town had arrived, in the summer of 1720, they held a town meeting and elected officials to care for matters of public concern such as the collection of taxes, the expenditure of town funds, the establishment and maintenance of boundaries and property rights, and the enforcement of good order and obedience to law. In the settlement of such towns as Litchfield, Woodbury, Harwinton and New Hartford, the colonists were a homogeneous body of neighbors or a company of church members, and they brought the town meeting with them to their new homes. But even though most of the western part of the county was settled by chance collections of people who purchased shares at public auction, and even though they often came from different places and did not even know each other, the same habits of local government were retained and they formed towns and held meetings that were effective in achieving the desired social control.

In most of the county the local town meeting form of government is basically the same today as it was in 1720. There are annual or biennial elections of town officers and at least one meeting a year on budgetary matters, supplemented by as many special meetings as there are crisis of sufficient importance to secure enough voters' names on a petition. The functions of collecting taxes, maintaining schools and roads and providing some poor relief remain today. A few functions have dropped — notably that of supporting the Congregational church and disputing ecclesiastical, as well as civil, questions at the meeting.

It is important to note three things about this kind of government. First of all, it is based on the idea that local control of local problems is best — that a situation which lies within the borders of a town and affects its citizens, is best handled by those citizens, not by an outside

agency or power. Secondly, it rests on the complete political equality of duly qualified citizens — i.e., those who either reside in the town or own property in it — and on their right to express their opinions on “whatever business shall properly come before this meeting.” A man’s fellow citizens, in weighing his opinions, may take into account his occupation, his morals, his personal ambitions and the state of his temper. But, whether he is complimented by being violently opposed by the next speaker, or snubbed by having his remarks received in silence and overlooked, he has a right to speak. Thirdly, it achieves orderliness without regimentation and permits independence without anarchy. Town government rarely attempted to legislate the morality of individual citizens, or to interfere with their beliefs, their ways of worship, their personal habits, or their prejudices unless such things interrupted the peaceful conduct of life in the community. Town meetings have always been the accepted way to deal with trouble in any form, and Litchfield County has never had vigilantes, indignant citizens’ committees, posses, or Ku Klux Klans. Nor have their ever been uprisings against the law and rarely even “house cleanings” of undesirable office-holders. The people have had a close enough grip on the government to be able to quell any runaway tendencies in governing power before they begin. In a rural town, government is as near at hand as the first selectman’s home or office; it is run by neighbors who are seen regularly as they go about their ordinary civil occupations. There is no mystery, no distance about it.

### **The Place of Part-Time Farming**

Another outstanding institutionalized behavior pattern of an entirely different sort is that of part-time farming combined with another occupation, be it carpenter, mechanic, real-estate agent or mail carrier. This pattern of piecing together a living out of diverse activities is as old as Litchfield and is, in part, a survival, though a sturdy one, of the days of self-sufficient farming when a specialist in one activity would have starved. In the early years of the county’s history the minister, the lawyer, the merchant, the miller, all tilled their shares of land. There wasn’t enough law business to keep one man, let alone two, alive, and there wasn’t enough cash trade alone to make the merchant rich. Today, in many rural towns, there is scarcely enough business the year ’round to keep a mason or a carpenter busy and to provide him a living. So he raises a few chickens, keeps a cow or two and has a garden. Or if he has one of the rarely demanded trades like stonecutting he may come to depend more on the land, and put in a small dairy herd or a flock of laying hens. Even if he is employed in the machine shops of Torrington or the brass mills of Waterbury, he may come home at night to an hour or two of chores around the barn and find himself cutting hay or sowing lime — “evenings and Sundays.”

Here again two important points stand out, two of the dominant themes of the culture are reflected. The part-time farmer of Litchfield County is not motivated by a deep-seated love of the soil. He stands half-way

between farming and a trade in order to increase his margin of security and because the environment does not provide full scope for his talents in the way he wants to use them. Depressions hit the mills and shops every so often, and when things get slack, it's a good idea to have a little land to fall back on. Again, for many, specialization in a trade would mean moving to a city and becoming a part of an industrial society — subject not only to its business cycles, but also its hard and fast routines of work. "If there's anything I don't like it's punching the time-clock and having the boss looking over your shoulder every minute. Out here I may not get the wages, but I get part of my living and I'm my own boss." Versatility is a customary trait among the rural people of the county and a man is much more proud of having a wide range of skills than he would be of being a highly skilled specialist. The tradition of the Yankee handyman and jack-of-all-trades still persists, a survival of the self-sufficient economy.

### The Central Value Structure

At first glance it seems that the two traits of orderliness and independence mentioned in connection with town meeting government might be antithetical. Yet these two are dominant patterns of behavior in Litchfield County and it is important to understand how they operate.

Independence, and self-reliance were highly important traits in the early years of settlement. In the self-sufficient economy, hard work and plenty of it was the rule. A man had all he could do to scratch out a living for himself and his family, all of whom worked. There was no surplus to support a population of idlers, and the incompetent and the weak were social liabilities. A natural corollary of this self reliance was individualism; if a man was completely responsible for his own fate, should he not be permitted to behave as he pleased, providing he did not injure his neighbor? It is this last phrase which is important. It has always been regarded as the limiting factor in personal liberty in these twenty-six towns. By his labor a man earned the right to be free, but correspondingly he did not earn the right to impose his will on another person, who also labored; only the common will of the town meeting could be so imposed.

In order to protect the rights of the individual members from encroachment and to gain the advantages of collective action on certain projects like schools, churches, roads and so on, the town was organized. The guiding principle was local settlement of local problems, which is but an extension of the principle of independent action to a larger social unit. When disputes arose between towns, or when towns were to be banded together for collective action, the next highest level of representative authority — the General Court or the legislative assembly — had to be called in. The question had grown beyond the accepted responsibility or capacity of the local unit.

The trait of individualism in personal actions has resulted in an enormous diversity of behavior and a lack of well-defined standards of

conduct. It is possible to find at least one exception to almost any generalization, and almost every variety of occupation, belief, farm practice, business arrangement, moral code (or lack of it), educational standard, and level of living can be discovered somewhere in the population. This does not mean that social chaos and anarchy are present, for in the departments of life where variation is most pronounced, only individual welfare is at stake. It is merely a reflection of the fact that, in this county at least, orderliness does not mean regimentation. A man may be as dour, taciturn, profane or ill-tempered as he likes; or he may be voluble, anxious to please, polite, and deferent. In either case there are some people who will ignore him and scorn him, while others will respect him and value his company.

The cultural origin of the trait of orderliness is obscure, but it is a fundamental theme. The citizens of this part of the country like to "know where they're at," and like to have situations clearly defined, courses of action specific and approved by themselves acting in concert. They distrust vagueness and casual indefiniteness. It is customary to walk the town boundaries every few years, even though they have been fixed for centuries. It is common to find the same man occupying the office of clerk, selectman or assessor for term after term because everyone knows what he will do, he is predictable, and therefore trustworthy.

Perhaps the desire for orderliness is related to the drive for security, if not simply another aspect of it. It may have arisen in the early days of the county when, in an environment that was unknown, weather and crops, Indian raids and the threat of disease were uncertain and unpredictable, it was desirable for men to set their houses in order and to introduce as much certainty and dependability into their affairs as possible. At any rate, it has been, and still is, a strong central idea that permeates the culture that the Litchfield people of today have inherited.

A second element of the central value structure is pragmatism. It is important in that it offers a consistent explanation of the seemingly inconsistent nature of New England character. Practicality, and the pragmatic evaluation of action flourishes at the expense of picturesqueness and colorful romance. Wild deeds or adventurous exploits are disdained. Almost the highest praise that can be given to a technique or a practice, is, "It works."

This pragmatic viewpoint sometimes leads to the tossing overboard of principle, to the confusion of some observers. Thus, while the Congregational Church began as a state church, and for a period of time its affairs were carried on along with civil matters in town meetings, in 1818 it was disestablished. By that time, there was no longer sectarian homogeneity even in rural towns, and it was impractical for the whole town to be forced to contribute to the support of a church which only part of its citizens attended. In the same way, certain thickly settled areas in Litchfield County have been incorporated and are governed as boroughs or as cities, because it was more practical to do so — the



citizens of these areas needed extra services or faced special problem situations which it was advantageous for them to handle by techniques which did not fit the town meeting government pattern. Correspondingly, while the high positive value assigned to keeping out of debt, being saving and cautious, is still widely supported in the county, no commercial dairyman hesitates to use available credit facilities to expand his business if he feels it will be profitable to him. If credit works, it is good. This pragmatic outlook has sometimes been confused with high moral principles. Although there are undoubtedly many people in the county who believe in the moral rightness of temperance, it is pertinent to note that one of the earliest statutes on the subject defined drunkenness as that state in which a man was unable to carry on the duties of his occupation. In other words, drunkenness is wrong because it prevents a man from earning his living — a highly practical point of view.

This pragmatism leads to a complete absence of overall, moral evaluations of such things as the best way to make a living, the best type of farming, and the poorest or worst kind of people. It leads to a flexibility of attitudes and evaluations about specific situations in the various departments of life. Thus farming is not valued as "the one best way" to live or make money, but rather it is considered good if it works under a particular set of circumstances. Similarly, the ownership of land, the use of particular tools or cropping methods, the variety of hay grown, are all good or bad, depending on whether they "work or not."

### Conservatism and Caution

Closely related to this practical outlook in several ways, is the characteristic conservatism and caution of Litchfield people. The reckless, gambling spirit of the explorer or the frontiersman is completely absent. Instead there is a widespread belief in the rightness of regularity and steadiness of performance of familiar tasks in customary ways. The effect which this trait produces in people who have been trained in the highly competitive and risk-taking atmosphere of metropolitan business is well illustrated by the comments of a New York born business man: "People have a kind of rural, backwoods attitude around here. We don't have any real aggressive men in the community. Speculation is the last thing they think about. Whenever there's the least element of chance, they crawl back into their shells. Very reserved, very slow."

Yet this cautious, almost suspicious, attitude toward change does not arise out of a moral conviction that "the old ways are best," but rather out of a practical evaluation of each situation and each technique — "as long as it works, stick by it" seems to be the reasoning. Litchfield people are opposed to change because it is uncomfortable and disorderly, but they will change when the *status quo* becomes unworkable and impractical.

The same viewpoint is reflected in their attitude toward the aggressive newcomer to town who wants to "stir things up," "put this town on



the map," or "improve this community." To these and like remarks which he considers overbearing and insulting, the Litchfield County citizen would probably reply that he liked it here the way it was and he'd rather have it peaceful and quiet than all stirred up. Besides, he would reflect, if there was anything seriously wrong with the community, it would probably come up at the next town meeting and be dealt with there in an orderly, sensible manner, with the least fuss and bother. He might also consider that the would-be leader was not a local man, and therefore, ignorant of the complexity of local problems. And finally, he would suspect that "making improvements" would involve the spending of town funds and possibly higher taxes. Right there, he would set his resolve against the stranger and begin to think of quiet, indirect ways to put this busybody in his place.

### **The Worth of a Man**

The worth of a man in this part of the country is judged not by his beliefs, his principles, his words, or his heroic accomplishments, but by his daily work, his honesty in keeping his promises, paying his debts and his taxes, his faithfulness in performing his duties, his reliability, and his industry. This is orderliness. If he is frugal and wise in the managing of his finances, if he "gets ahead," avoids rashness and makes shrewd judgments about future courses of action, he wins extra respect. If, in addition to these qualities, he is neat, kind, friendly, polite and good-humored, he is a model citizen. But the permissiveness of the culture increases as the generality of conduct narrows from the highly social to the highly personal, and the minimum requirement for good citizenship is given in the first list of qualifications above.

### **Cultural Assimilation of the Foreign-Born**

It may seem to the reader that the importance of the Yankee-Puritan heritage has been overstressed, when he reflects that more than half of the county population today is no more than three generations removed from western Europe. But, although they may outnumber the Yankees the newcomers have not beaten down the Yankee culture — rather they have been assimilated into it, especially in the second generation. They have not changed its architecture, its system of landholding, its kinds of business enterprises, its form of government. These things have been firmly entrenched and well adapted to the region and to the possible ways of life in it.

The reason for this ease of assimilation is not far to seek. The clue is given in the permissive nature of the Yankee culture, which allows its members all sorts of personal freedoms, differences, even eccentricities, as long as they do not trespass upon the rights of their neighbors. And it is in the areas of life in which this permissiveness, this right of individualism is the most freely granted that the greatest differences between Yankee and Pole or Italian or Irish existed.

Thus a Yankee can watch the erection of a Catholic Church across the green from the proud-pillared Congregational meeting house without resentment or envy, for he knows that the Kuzinskis, the O'Tooles and the Grazianos have the right to worship as they please and he approves their doing so. He can observe the Kuzinski family, women, children and all, out working in the fields on Sunday and, while he may not approve their actions, he makes no attempt to stop them or to "correct" their behavior. If a man wants to work his womenfolk that way, that's his business, though the Hunts, or the Buells wouldn't do it. The Yankee farmer's wife may be bewildered and a little embarrassed at the way her foreign neighbors "take on" over a death in the family. She herself would be restrained. Rather than join in their uninhibited mourning she wants to help around the place by getting a meal or putting the children to bed, the proper kind of neighborly help in crises. But, though she may shake her head about it later when she tells her husband she makes no move to reprimand the grief-stricken family for their "undignified" behavior. And if one of the Webb boys wants to marry that oldest Kuzinski girl, why, that's his business. His folks may not be pleased at having the Kuzinskis for in-laws; they may believe that the two young people do not have enough in common to make the marriage a success; and they may try hard to talk him out of it. But, if Allan Webb still wants to marry Rosemary Kuzinski, then it's up to him, for he's the best judge of what he wants in a wife.

The immigrants had to adapt to one institutional way — the town meeting. They had to learn its ways and to learn to abide by its decrees. But, for most, it was pleasant learning, for they gained an extent of control over their government which they had never known in the old country. No one pulled them out of their homes to vote or to come to the meeting, but no one tried to keep them away, and people listened respectfully when, in halting English, they made their maiden speeches about taxes or road improvement.

Most of the foreign-born fitted in easily to the part-time farming and industrial pattern of making a living. They got farm or factory jobs and saved or spent their money as they chose. Some bought run-down farms and built them up by unrelenting hard work, scratching out a living where Yankees had failed. Many stuck by "old-fashioned" farming methods, rejecting tractors and milking machines, but their sons have been quick to act on the technical advice of the Farm Bureau or the State University, and have closed the technological gaps. Others stayed in the mills or the shops, and, where there was a sizeable collection of their fellow countrymen, formed the Sons of Italy Association and played *bocce* on Sunday afternoons in vacant lots.

Most of them soon learned Yankee ways in business and in government, and they had no apparent conflict with the conservatism, the pragmatism, and the social orderliness which were set up as examples for them by the culture. And their sons and daughters have had none either.

### Segmentation of Rural Society

Rather than being divided primarily according to nativity, or ethnic backgrounds rural society is, as we have seen, tripartitely arranged according to occupation and residence, into farmers, resident-nonfarm dwellers, and seasonal residents.

The rural society of the county has undergone a vast change in the more than two centuries since the county was settled. In the beginning, towns were settled by groups of people who were homogeneous in national origin, religion, and cultural heritage, and most of them followed a similar way of life. Self-sufficient or, at least, subsistence farming was the dominant occupation, and all families were bound to the soil by the same kinds of ties. Gradually, throughout the centuries, rural society lost its homogeneity. Variety appeared in religious beliefs, national origins, and occupations; both the reasons why the people lived in the county and their activities while there became diverse. Today rural society can be broadly divided into three major segments — farmers, resident-nonfarmers, and seasonal residents — while religious, ethnic, social class, occupation and special interest groupings further fractionate it. As a result of this increased complexity and diversity, rural Litchfield society has lost its pristine, organic unity, and gained, in its stead, a kind of mechanical integration which rests upon conscious, contractual relationships. This kind of integration is based more on considerations of self-interest than on feelings of group or inter-personal loyalty. It has altered the pattern of behavior in many ways. The old, homogeneous farm neighborhood has disappeared, and, with it, the habits of mutual aid and exchange of work among neighbors. In their place have appeared various agricultural-technological organizations which provide technical services, and formalized associations which serve as the framework for charitable, civic, fraternal and sociability activities.

To a surprising degree, however, the central value structure, erected on the colonial agricultural subsistence base, has endured. While the values we have discussed above are not equally shared by all the segments of the rural population, they are still held intensely by the full-time farming population — the “real farmers.” The resident-nonfarm population, especially those who were born and raised in rural Litchfield, also govern their lives, to a great extent, by these values. The seasonal resident population, on the other hand, is much less touched by them and usually lives by the standards which have developed in large eastern cities — one reason for the frequently mentioned hiatus in point of view between these people and the year-round residents of the county.

### The Role of Dairying in the Culture

Specialized dairy farming developed in Litchfield County through a confluence of economic, physical and social forces. We have already seen how economic pressures of western competition in general farming, and the demand for fresh milk and dairy products from the nearby

eastern cities circumscribed the range of profitable farm enterprises; and we have observed how the soils and the moist climate of the county favored the growing of hay and roughage crops and its location facilitates the marketing of fresh fluid milk. But had it not been for a favorable social and cultural atmosphere in the county, the economic and physical pressures might only have forced land out of agriculture instead of into dairy farm use.

But dairying fitted into the Litchfield way of life. Primarily, it satisfied the pragmatic requirements: it worked. But, in addition, the stability, regularity and non-speculativeness of dairy farming both as a business enterprise and as a way of life satisfied the cultural requirements of orderliness and conservatism. As we have seen, the pattern of work in making milk is orderly and systematic. It demands regular performance of chores and provides a regular income evenly distributed throughout the year. The high capital investment and the length of time needed to build a dairy herd encourages a long-residence on the same farm and a devotion to building up the operator's equity in the place gradually. And dairying is anything but speculative. Instead of staking his whole year's success on a single harvest, he depends upon the steady, day-in, day-out measurable performance of his herd.

And thereby he increases the control he has over his own fate. He has a definite idea of his gross income, he can predict it fairly closely, and he can tell which animals are profitable or unprofitable. By systematic, scientific testing, or by common-sense record keeping, he can determine not only which cows he should keep or sell, but also what to feed them, how much to feed and what input pattern he should follow for best results.

Because he does have this measure of control over his economic destiny and because he is free, within the limits of the dairy cow's daily and seasonal production rhythms, to vary his farming practices and to adopt those which best fit his farm layout, his land and his personal tastes, he gains some of the independence which is such a highly prized element of the culture.

But he does not gain as much as he wants in two spheres: in feeding his cattle and in marketing. And it is here that dairying becomes a yoke and chafes the Litchfield farmer.

When western grain began coming into the county in the '80's and '90's, the self-sufficient aspect of farming finally died. Today Litchfield County farmers depend on outside sources not only for their tools, their clothing, their food, their transportation, and a hundred conveniences, but even for the input of raw materials. Essentially, the dairy farm is a factory — the dairy cow is a machine which processes the raw materials of grain, hay and water and turns out the finished product — milk. Like many other machines, she needs careful tending, and, like them again, if the supply of raw materials ceases, she becomes idle and useless. This dissatisfying dependence on outside grain is re-



flected in the almost unceasing flow of complaints which Litchfield farmers make about the price of feed and its availability. Most of them realize, pragmatically, that this dependence is economically necessary because of the physical aspects of the land — but almost all are unable to accept it willingly and uncomplainingly.

In the area of marketing, too, the farmer complains, this time about the government regulated price he receives for milk. While he enjoys the element of regularity in stable pricing and payment, and would be outraged at the suggestion that each farmer bargain individually each day with a dealer over the price of each can of milk, he nevertheless regards buying and selling as an area of behavior which is a matter of individual rather than social responsibility — and, hence, an activity in which the principal of independence rather than that of social regulation (an aspect of orderliness) should obtain. Again, it violates the principle of independence that a higher authority than himself or than a local group of farmers and dealers should regulate the price of milk. The fact of a stable price is accepted, and regarded as desirable, but the “interference” of the federal government in what the farmer considers an individual or at best a local-group matter, is rejected as wrong. While he may advocate the setting of a “fair price that would guarantee a profit to the farmer,” he questions the ability of any higher authority to determine what this “fair price” should be.

There is another aspect of independence to be mentioned in connection with dairying. While it is not characteristic exclusively of dairy farming, it is an important element of it. This is the “managerial psychology” which farmers in Litchfield County have and which many of their neighbors — the factory workers in particular — do not attain. This state of mind is seen most clearly in the satisfaction farmers derive from making their own plans and decisions, and bearing their own responsibilities and worries rather than shifting them to the shoulders of a superintendent, foreman or manager. It is reflected sharply in the comment most often heard from part-time farmers or former factory workers who have gone into commercial agriculture: “The thing about farming is, you’re your own boss — you’re not taking orders from somebody else.” A farmer can exercise his own judgment in deciding whether to do a particular job now or postpone it, whether to take a break to chat with a visitor or passerby, whether to buy or sell a cow, a machine, a piece of land or any other possession. There is no time clock to punch, no one to order him around or insist that he do a thing in a particular way. This kind of independence is a cherished attribute of farm life and, since its value is based chiefly on emotional rather than logical grounds, whenever it is threatened, the supporting emotionality is released in an aggressive dislike or scorn for the source of the threat.

This explains, in part, the outspoken and often seemingly irrational antipathy which many farmers have for agencies of the federal government (and also the state government) which attempts to regulate various aspects of farming. Not only do farmers feel that their economic stake in agriculture is being threatened, but also their independence. It is



part of the basis for the farmers' contemptuous wrath over "fillin' out forms," "tryin' to make sense outa those blamed regulations," and "havin' to *beg* the government to *let you buy* something you need in the worst way." Its complement is seen in the emotional, but factually sketchy, arguments which farmers make for "the law of supply and demand," or "free competition." It is this fundamental orientation toward what the farmer considers personal liberty and independence in the economic sphere of his life which causes him to regard all governmental attempts to regulate or even to influence the course of economic affairs as "interfering" or "meddling."

It is only when his confidence in his own judgment and that of his neighbors and the "leading farmers" in his community is shaken by a series of failures and errors, as it was during the depression years, or when he is confused and baffled and feels his own individual efforts to be in vain and ineffectual, that the average farmer in the county will surrender willingly any share of his independence. But when the tide of affairs is rising, the market is good, the weather favorable, and production figures high, his old faith in himself is reasserted, and the air is filled with loud complaints about the government, the milk administrator, the milk dealers, the feed companies, the state milk inspector, or the price of groceries, clothes or automobiles. When his complaints are loud and bitter, the farmer is likely to be healthy and solvent; when he is silent or in desperation calls for outside help, he is in real trouble.

In conclusion, it is important to point out that the contemporary organization of rural society in the county is not merely a chance arrangement of relationships. Rather, it is the product of a complex interweaving of certain historical events and trends (notably those of urbanization, industrialization, and the expansion of the West), with a particular physical-geographic environment, and with a social configuration that was established during the pioneer period of settlement.

Town-meeting government was a part of the baggage of the earliest settlers, and is still the basic political unit, having lost comparatively few of its functions. Part-time farming, which grew up in the colonial period in response to the needs of an isolated, self-sufficient economy, survives today as an economic shock absorber, although the non-agricultural activities of part-time farmers have changed a great deal. The central value structure, developed from the pioneer situation and served to buttress internally certain modes of behavior which were necessary for survival. Most of these values are in harmony with the external conditions of contemporary life, although the value placed on independence and self-determination in economic life is in conflict with what seems to be a long-time trend toward increased centralization of economic control.

The alteration in social structure which was produced by the immigration of non-Yankees, and by the gradual urbanization, industrialization, and, later, suburbanization of the county, is reflected in a marked emphasis on formal groupings and specialized interest organizations.

Finally, dairy farming has emerged as the chief agricultural enterprise. Well adapted to the physical environment, to the geographic position of the county, and to the cultural heritage, it is the latest version of the seemingly endless struggle which Litchfield farmers have waged for survival in a changing world.

Yet, though fluid milk is the predominant farm enterprise, neither dairying nor agriculture as a whole occupies the predominant position in the economy of the county. Nonfarm occupations employ a majority of rural people and even a majority of those workers who live on farms. A wide variety of manufacturing industries, and of trade and service enterprises are to be found almost anywhere in the county. Agriculture has become interstitial in this highly suburbanized region, and is subject to certain pressures from the nonfarm economy which are making it harder and harder to make a living out of dairying. The short labor supply and the high wage level which face farmers who are attempting to compete with industry in the labor market; the high cost of raw materials, especially feed grains, which must be imported; and, not least, the higher cost of land which arises out of the constantly increasing demand for seasonal and suburban residences; all of these exert their strength against the commercial farmers of the county.

What the outcome of the contest will be is not the proper subject of this report. But the farmers of Litchfield County will probably find a way out — they always have.























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